

# The PD Gazetteer I

Short Stories in the Public Domain

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## **Little Karen and Her Baby**

By Susan Coolidge, from *A Round Dozen*

THE cottage in which little Karen lived stood high up on the hillside, close to the edge of a great forest. It was a strange, lonely place for a young wife, almost a girl, to be so happy in; but Karen was not afraid of the forest, and never thought her home lonely, not even when the strong winds blew in winter-time, and brought the far-off baying of wolves from the mountains beyond. Her husband, her boy, her housewifely cares, her spinning-wheel, and her needle kept her busy all day long, and she was as cheerful as busy. The cottage was not large, but it was strongly built of heavy beams and stones. Its low walls seemed to hug and clasp the ground, as if for protection in time of storm. The casement windows, with their very small panes of thick glass, let in little sun, but all summer long they stood open, and in winter, what with the crackling fire, the hum of the wheel, and Karen's bright face, the living-room never looked dark, and, for all its plainness, had an air of quaint comfort about it. Fritz, Karen's husband, who was skilful with tools, had ornamented the high-backed chair, the press for clothes, and the baby's oaken cradle, with beautiful carving, of which little Karen was exceedingly proud. She loved her cottage, she loved the great wood close by; her lonely life was delightful to her, and she had not the least wish to exchange it for the toy-like village in the valley below.

But Karen was unlike other people, the neighbors said, and the old gossips were wont to shake their heads, and mutter that there was a reason for this unlikeness, and that all good Christians ought to pity and pray for the poor child.

Long, long ago, said these gossips,—so long that nobody now could remember exactly when it was,—Karen's great-great-great-grandfather, (or perhaps \_his\_ grandfather—who could tell?) when hunting in the high mountains, met a beautiful, tiny maiden, so small and light that a man could easily carry her in the palm of one hand. This maiden he fell in love with, and he won her to be his wife. She made a good wife; kept the house as bright as new tin; and on her wheel spun linen thread so fine that mortal eye could hardly see it. But a year and a day from the time of her marriage she went out to walk in the wood, and never came back any more! The reason of this was, that she was a gnomide,—daughter of one of the forest gnomes,—and when her own people encountered her thus alone, they detained her, and would not suffer her to return to her husband. The baby she left in the cradle grew to be a woman,—bigger than her gnome mother, it is true, but still very small; and all the

women of the race have been small since that time. Witness little Karen herself, whose head only came up to the shoulder of her tall Fritz. Then her passion for woods and solitary places, her beautiful swift spinning, her hair, of that peculiar pale white-brown shade,—all these were proofs of the drops of unearthly blood which ran in her veins. Gnomes always had white hair. This was because they lived in holes and dark places. Even a potato would throw out white leaves if kept in a cellar,—everybody knew that,—and the gossips, ending thus, would shake their heads again, and look very wise.

Karen had heard these stories, and laughed at them. No fairy or gnome had ever met her eyes in the woods she loved so well; and as for hair, Rosel Pilaff's, and Gretchen Erl's too, was almost as pale as hers. Fair hair is common enough in the German mountains. Her little boy—bless him!—had downy rings which promised to become auburn in time, the color of his father's beard. She did not believe in the gnome story a bit.

But there came a time when she almost wished to believe it, for the gnomes are said to be wise folk, and little Fritz fell ill of a strange disease, which neither motherly wisdom nor motherly nursing was able to reach. Each day left him thinner and weaker, till he seemed no more than half his former size. His very face looked strange as it lay on the cradle-pillow, and Karen was at her wits' end to know what to do.

"I will go to the village and ask Mother Klaus to come and see the child," said Fritz. "She may know of a remedy."

"It will be of no use," declared Karen, sadly. "She went to the Berards' and the baby died, and to Heinrich's and little Marie died. But go, go, Fritz!—only come back soon, lest our angel take flight while you are away!"

She almost pushed him from the door, in her impatience to have him return.

A while after, when the baby had wailed himself to sleep, she went again to the door to look down the path into the valley. It was too soon to hope for Fritz, but the movement seemed a relief to her restlessness. It was dusk, not dark,—a sweet, mild dusk, with light enough left to show the tree-branches as they met and waved against the dim yellow sky. Deep shadows lay on the moss-beds and autumn flowers which grew beneath; only a faint perfume here and there told of their presence, and the night was very near.

Too unhappy to mind the duskiness, Karen wandered a little way up the wood-path, and sat down on the root of an old oak, so old that the rangers had given it the name of "Herr Grandfather." It was only to clear her brimming eyes that she sat down. She wiped them with her kerchief, and, with one low sob, was about to rise, when she became aware that somebody was standing at her side.

This somebody was a tiny old woman, with a pale, shadowy, but sweet face, framed in flossy white hair. She wore a dark, foreign-looking robe; a pointed hood, edged with fur, was pulled over her head; and the hand which she held out as she spoke was as white as the stalk of celery.

"What is the matter, my child?" she asked, in a thin, rustling voice,

which yet sounded pleasantly, because it was kind.

"My baby is \_so\_ ill," replied Karen, weeping.

"How ill?" inquired the old woman, anxiously. "Is it cold? Is it fever? Do its eyes water? My baby once had a cold, and her eyes--" She stopped abruptly.

"His eyes do not water," said Karen, who felt singularly at home with the stranger. "But his head is hot, and his hands; he sleeps ill, and for these ten days has hardly eaten. He grows thinner and whiter every hour, and wails whenever he is awake. Oh, what am I doing? I must go back to him." And, as she spoke, she jumped from her seat.

"One minute!" entreated the little old woman. "Has he pain anywhere?"

"He cries when I move his head," said Karen, hurrying on.

The stranger went too, keeping close beside her in a swift, soundless way.

"Take courage, Liebchen, child to her who was child of my child's child," she said. "Weep not, my darling. I will send you help. Out of the wisdom of the earth shall come aid for the little dear one."

"What \_do\_ you mean?" cried Karen, stopping short in her surprise.

But the old woman did not answer. She had vanished. Had the wind blown her away?

"How could I wander so far? How could I leave my baby? Wicked mother that I am!" exclaimed Karen, in sudden terror, as she ran into the cottage.

But nothing seemed disturbed, and no one had been there. The baby lay quietly in his cradle, and the room was quite still, save for the hiss of the boiling pot and the fall of an ember on the hearth. Gradually her heart ceased its terrified beating; a sense of warmth and calm crept over her, her eyes drooped, and, seated at the cradle-foot, she fell asleep in her chair.

Whether it was an hour or a minute that she slept, she never knew. Slowly and dimly her waking senses crept back to her; but though she heard and saw and understood, she could neither stir nor speak. Two forms were bending over the cradle, forms of little men, venerable and shadowy, with hair like snow, and blanched, pale hands, like her visitor of the afternoon. They did not look at Karen, but consulted together above the sleeping child.

"It is \_here\_, brother, and \_here\_," said one, laying his finger gently on the baby's head and heart.

"Does it lie too deep for our reaching?" asked the second, anxiously.

"No. The little herb you know of is powerful."

"And the crystal dust \_you\_ know of is more powerful still."

Then they took out two minute caskets, and Karen saw them open the

baby's lips, and each drop in a pinch of some unknown substance.

"He is of ours," whispered one, "more of ours than any of them have been since the first."

"He has the gift of the far sight," said the other, lightly touching the closed eyes, "the divining glance, and the lucky finger."

"I read in him the apprehension of metals," said the second old man, "the sense of hidden treasures, the desire to penetrate."

"We will teach him how the waters run, and what the birds say--yes, and the way in and the way out!"

"Put the charm round his neck, brother."

Then Karen saw the little men tie a bright object round the baby's neck. She longed to move, but still she sat mute and powerless, while the odd figures passed round the cradle, slowly at first, then faster and faster, crooning, as they went, a song which was like wind in branches, and of which this scrap lodged in her memory:--

"Eyes to pierce the darkness through,  
Wit to grasp the hidden clew,  
Heart to feel and hand to do,--  
These the gnomes have given to you."

So the song and the circling movement went on, faster and more fast, and round and round, till Karen's head swam and her senses seemed to spin in a whirling dance; and she knew no more till roused by the opening of the door, and Fritz's voice exclaiming: "Come in, Dame Klaus--come in! Karen! Where are you, wife? Ah, here she is, fast asleep, and the little man is asleep too."

"I am not asleep," said Karen, finding her voice with an effort. Then, to her husband's surprise, she began to weep bitterly. But, for all his urgings, she would not tell the cause, for she was afraid of Dame Klaus's tongue.

The dame shook her head over the sick baby. He was very bad, she said; still, she had brought through others as bad as he, and there was no telling. She asked for a saucepan, and began to brew a tea of herbs, while Karen, drawing her husband aside, told her wonderful tale in a whisper.

"Thou wert dreaming, Karen; it is nothing but a dream," declared the astounded Fritz.

"No, no," protested Karen. "It was not a dream. Baby will be well again, and great things are to happen! You will see! The little men know!"

"Little men! Oh, Karen! Karen!" exclaimed Fritz.

But he said no more, for Karen, bending over the cradle, lifted the strange silver coin which was tied round the baby's neck, and held it up to him with a smile. A silver piece is not a dream, as every one knows; so Fritz, though incredulous, held his tongue, and neither he nor Karen said a word of the matter to Mother Klaus.

Baby \_was\_ better next day. It was all the herb-tea, Mother Klaus declared, and she gained great credit for the cure.

This happened years ago. Little Fritz grew to be a fine man, sound and hearty, though never as tall as his father. He was a lucky lad too, the villagers said, for his early taste for minerals caught the attention of a rich gentleman, who sent him to the school of mines, where he got great learning. Often when the mother sat alone at her wheel, a smile came to her lips, and she hummed low to herself the song of the little old men:--

"Eyes to pierce the darkness through,  
Wit to grasp the hidden clew,  
Heart to feel and hand to do,--  
These the gnomes have given to you."

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***No one knew, no one cared. For a great lethargy was overcoming the people and their only salvation was--***

## **The LAST Gentleman**

By Rory Magill

The explosion brought Jim Peters upright in bed. He sat there, leaning back on the heels of his hands, blinking stupidly at the wall. His vision cleared and he looked down at Myra, just stirring beside him. Myra opened her eyes.

Jim said, "Did you feel that?"

Myra yawned. "I thought I was dreaming. It was an explosion or something, wasn't it?"

Jim's lips set grimly. After ten years of cold war, there was only one appropriate observation, and he made it. "I guess maybe this is it."

As by common agreement, they got out of bed and pulled on their robes. They went downstairs and out into the warm summer night. Other people had come out of their homes also. Shadowy figures moved and collected in the darkness.

"Sounded right on top of us."

"I was looking out the window. Didn't see no flash."

"Must have been further away than it seemed."

This last was spoken hopefully, and reflected the mood of all the people. Maybe it wasn't the bomb after all.

Oddly, no one had thought to consult a radio. The thought struck them as a group and they broke into single and double units again--hurrying back into the houses. Lights began coming on here and there.

Jim Peters took Myra's hand, unconsciously, as they hurried up the porch steps. "Hugh would know," Jim said. "I kind of wish Hugh was here."

Myra laughed lightly--a calculated laugh, meant to disguise the gravity of this terrible thing. "That's not very patriotic, Jim. If that was the bomb, Hugh will be kept busy making other bombs to send back to them."

"But he'd know. I'll bet he could tell just by the sound of it." Jim smiled quietly in the darkness--proudly. It wasn't everybody who had a genius for a brother. A nuclear scientist didn't happen in every family. Hugh was somebody to be proud of.

They turned on the radio and sat huddled in front of it. The tubes warmed with maddening slowness. Then there came the deliberately impersonal voice of the announcer:

"--on the strength of reports now in, it appears the enemy bungled badly. Instead of crippling the nation, they succeeded only in alerting it. The bombs--at this time there appear to have been five of them dropped--formed a straight north-south line across western United States. One detonated close to the Idaho-Utah line. The other four were placed at almost equi-distant points to the south--the fifth bomb, according to first reports, exploding in a Mexican desert. We have been informed that Calas, Utah, a town of nine hundred persons, has been completely annihilated. For further reports, keep tuned to this station."

[Illustration: \_The fifth "one" exploded in the Mexican desert.\_]

A dance band cut in. Jim got up from his chair. "They certainly did bungle," he said. "Imagine wasting four atom bombs like that."

Myra got up also. "Would you like some coffee?"

"That'd be a good idea. I don't feel like going back to bed. I want to listen for more reports."

But there were no more reports. An hour passed. Another and another. Jim spun the dials and got either silence or the cheerful blatherings of some inane disc jockey who prattled on as though nothing had happened.

Finally Jim snapped the set off. "Censorship," he said. "Now we're going to see what it's really like."

In the morning they gathered again in groups--the villagers in this little community of five hundred, and discussed the shape of things to come, as they visualized them.

"It'll take a little time to get into action," old Sam Bennett said. "Even expecting it, and with how fast things move these days--it'll take time."

"If they invade us--come down from the north--you think the government will let us know they're coming?"

"You can't tell. Censorship is a funny thing. In the last war, we knew more about what was going on in Europe than the people that lived there."

At that moment, old Mrs. Kendal fainted dead away and had to be carried home. Three men carried her and Tom Edwards was one of them. "Kind of heavy, ain't she?" Tom said. "I never thought Mary weighed much more than a hundred."

That night the village shook. In his home, Jim staggered against the wall. Myra fell to the floor. There were two tremors--the second worse than the first. Then things steadied away, and he helped Myra to her feet.

"But there wasn't any noise," Myra whispered. The whisper was loud in the silence.

"That was an earthquake," Jim said. "Nothing to worry about. Might be one of the bomb's after effects."

The quake did no great damage in the village, but it possibly contributed to old Mrs. Kendal's death. She passed on an hour later. "Poor old lady," a neighbor told Myra. "She was plain weary. That was what she said just before she closed her eyes. 'Hazel' she said, 'I'm just plumb tuckered.'"

The neighbor wiped her face with her apron and turned toward home. "Think I'll lie down for a spell. I'm tuckered myself. Can't take things like I used to."

\* \* \* \* \*

Now it was a week after the earthquake--two weeks after the falling of the bombs, and the town went on living. But it was strange, very strange. Art Cordell voiced the general opinion when he said, "You know, we waited a long time for the thing to happen--we kind of visualized, maybe, how it'd be. But I didn't figure it'd be anything like this."

"Maybe there isn't any war," Jim said. "Washington hasn't said so."

"Censorship."

"But isn't that carrying censorship a little too far? The people ought to be told whether or not they're at war."

But the people didn't seem to care. A deadening lethargy had settled over them. A lethargy they felt and questioned in their own minds, but didn't talk about, much. Talking itself seemed to have become an effort.

This continued weariness--this dragging of one foot after another--was evidently the result of radiation from the bombs. What other place could it come from? The radiation got blamed for just about everything untoward that happened. It caused Jenkin's apples to fall before they were half-ripe. Something about it bent the young wheat to the ground where it mildewed and rotted.

Some even blamed the radiation for the premature birth of Jane Elman's baby, even though such things had happened before even gun powder was invented.

But it certainly was a strange war. Nothing came over the radio at all. Nobody seemed to care, really. Probably because they were just plain too tired. Jim Peters dragged himself to and from work in sort of a daze. Myra got her housework done, but it was a greater effort every day. All she could think of was the times she could drop on the lounge for a rest. She didn't care much whether a war was going on or not.

People had quit waiting for them to come down from the north. They knew that the places where the bombs had fallen were guarded like Fort Knox. Nobody got in or out.

Jim remembered the flash, the color, the rumors, the excitement of World War Two. The grim resolution of the people to buckle down and win it. Depots jammed. Kids going off to join.

But nobody went to join this war. That was funny. Somehow Jim hadn't thought of that before. None of the kids was being called up. Did they have enough men? Washington didn't say. Washington didn't say anything.

And the people didn't seem to care. That was the strange thing, when you could get your tired mind to focus on it.

The people didn't care. They were too busily occupied with the grim business of putting one foot in front of the other.

Jim got home one evening to find Myra staring dully at a small handful of ground meat. "That's a pound," she said.

Jim frowned. "What do you mean? That little bit?"

Myra nodded. "I asked for a pound of hamburger and Art put that much on the scale. In fact not even that much. It said a pound. I saw it. But there was such a little bit that he felt guilty and put some more on."

Jim turned away. "I'm not hungry anyhow," he said.

\* \* \* \* \*

At ten that night, after they were in bed, a knock sounded on the door. They had been in bed three hours, because all they could think of as soon as they had eaten was getting into bed and staying there until the



last possible minute on the following morning.

But the knock came and Jim went down. He called back upstairs with more life than he'd shown in a long time, "Myra--come down. It's Hugh. Hugh's come to see us."

And Myra came down quickly--something she hadn't done for a long time either.

Hugh seemed weary and drawn, but his smile was the same. Hugh hadn't changed a great deal from the gangling kid who never studied mathematics in school but always had the answers. It came natural to him.

During the coffee that Myra made, Hugh said, "Had quite a time getting here. Trains disrupted. All air lines grounded. But I wanted to see you again before--"

"Then there is a war," Jim said. "We've been kind of wondering out here. With the censorship we don't get any news and the people hereabouts have almost forgotten the bombs I guess."

Hugh stared into his coffee cup for a long time. "No--there isn't any war." Hugh grinned wryly. "I don't think anybody in the world has got enough energy left to fight one."

"There was one then? One that's over?" Jim felt suddenly like a fool, sitting here on a world that might have gone through a war stretching from pole to pole, and asking if it had happened as though he lived on Mars somewhere--out of touch. But that's the way it was.

"No there wasn't any war."

"You mean our government shot off those bombs themselves? You know I thought it was funny. Landing out in the desert that way like they did."

"Old Joe would have hit for Chicago or Detroit or New York. It was silly to say bombs dropped on the desert came from an enemy."

"No--the government didn't fire them."

Myra set her cup down. "Jim, stop asking Hugh so many questions. He's tired. He's come a long way. The questions can wait."

"Yes--I guess they can. We'll show you where your room is, Hugh."

As she opened the window of the spare bedroom, Myra stood for a moment looking out. "Moon's certainly pretty tonight. So big and yellow. Wish I wasn't too tired to enjoy it."

They went to bed then, in the quiet home under the big yellow moon over the quiet town. A moon over a quiet country--over a weary, waiting, world.

Jim didn't go to work the next day. He hadn't planned to stay away from work, but he and Myra awoke very late and it was then that he made up his mind. For a long time, they lay in bed, not even the thought of Hugh

being around and all the things they wanted to talk about, could bring them out of bed until they felt guilty about not getting up.

Hugh was sitting on the front porch watching the still trees in the yard. There was a breeze blowing, but it wasn't enough to move the leaves. Every leaf hung straight down, not stirring, and the grass seemed matted and bent toward the earth.

Myra got breakfast. She dropped the skillet while transferring the eggs to a platter but she got her foot out of the way so no harm was done. After breakfast the men went back outside. Jim moved automatically toward a chair.

Then he stopped and frowned. He straightened deliberately. He turned and looked at his brother. He said, "Hugh. You're a man that knows. What's wrong? What did those bombs do to us? Tell me. I've got to know."

Hugh was silent for a time. Then he said, "Feel up to a walk?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

They went to the edge of town and out into a pasture and stopped finally by a brook where the water flowed sluggishly.

After a while, Hugh said, "I'm not supposed to tell anybody anything, but somehow it doesn't seem decent--keeping the truth from your own brother. And what difference does it make--really?"

"What's happened, Hugh."

"There weren't any bombs."

"No bombs."

"It happened this way. Long before this Earth was formed, a million light years out in space, a white dwarf died violently."

"You're talking in riddles."

Hugh looked up into the blue sky. "A dwarf star, Jim. So incredibly heavy, it would be hard for you to conceive of its weight. This star blew up--broke into five pieces and the five pieces followed each other through space. This world was formed in the meantime--maybe even this galaxy--we don't know. So the five pieces of heavy star had a rendezvous with a world unborn. The world was born and grew old and then the rendezvous was kept. Right on schedule. On some schedule so huge and ponderous we can't even begin to understand it."

"The five bombs."

"They hit the earth in a line and drove deep into the ground. But that was only the beginning. It all has to do with magnetism--the way they kept right on burrowing toward the center of our earth--causing the earthquakes--causing apples to fall from trees." Hugh turned to glance at Jim. "Did you know you weigh around six hundred pounds now?"

"I haven't weighed myself lately."

"We checked and found out what the stuff was. We'd never seen anything like it before. That star was a real heavyweight. All the pieces are drawing together toward the center of earth. But they'll never get there."

"They won't."

"We're doomed, Jim. Earth is doomed. That's the why of this censorship. We didn't want panics--mass suicide--a world gone mad."

"How's it going to come?"

"If allowed to run its course, the world would come to a complete standstill. Nothing would grow. People would move slower and slower until they finally fell in their tracks and could not get up. Eternal night on one side of a dead planet--eternal day on the other."

"But it's not going to happen?"

Hugh's mind went off on another track. "You know, Jim--I've never been a religious man. In fact I've only had one concept of God. I believe that God--above all, is a gentleman."

Jim said nothing and after a moment, Hugh went on. "Do you know what they do when they execute a man by firing squad?"

"What do they do?"

"After the squad fires its volley, the Captain steps up to the fallen man and puts a bullet through his brain. The man is executed for a reason, but the bullet is an act of mercy--the act of a gentleman."

"We are being executed for a reason we can't understand, and the bullet has already been fired, Jim. Another ten hours--eleven hours."

"What bullet?"

"Look up there. See it? The Moon."

Jim looked dully into the sky. "It's bigger--a way bigger."

"Hurtling in toward us at ever increasing speed. When it hits--"

Jim looked at his brother with complete understanding at last. "When it hits--we won't be here any more."

"That's right. A quick, easy death for the world--from the bullet fired by the Last Gentleman."

They turned back toward the house. "Shall I tell Myra," Jim asked.

"What do you think you should do?"

"No--no, we won't tell her. We've got ten hours."

"Yes--we've got ten hours."

"Let's go home and have some coffee."

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Last Gentleman, by Rory Magill

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## A DEBT OF HONOR. A GHOST STORY.

Hush! what was that cry, so low but yet so piercing, so strange but yet so sorrowful? It was not the marmot upon the side of the Righi--it was not the heron down by the lake; no, it was distinctively human. Hush! there it is again--from the churchyard which I have just left!

Not ten minutes have elapsed since I was sitting on the low wall of the churchyard of Weggis, watching the calm glories of the moonlight illuminating with silver splendor the lake of Lucerne; and I am certain there was no one within the inclosure but myself.

I am mistaken, surely. What a silence there is upon the night! Not a breath of air now to break up into a thousand brilliant ripples the long reflection of the August moon, or to stir the foliage of the chestnuts; not a voice in the village; no splash of oar upon the lake. All life seems at perfect rest, and the solemn stillness that reigns about the topmost glaciers of S. Gothard has spread its mantle over the warmer world below.

I must not linger; as it is, I shall have to wake up the porter to let me into the hotel. I hurry on.

Not ten paces, though. Again I hear the cry. This time it sounds to me like the long, sad sob of a wearied and broken heart. Without staying to reason with myself, I quickly retrace my steps.

I stumble about among the iron crosses and the graves, and displace in my confusion wreaths of immortelles and fresher flowers. A huge mausoleum stands between me and the wall upon which I had been sitting not a quarter of an hour ago. The mausoleum casts a deep shadow upon the side nearest to me. Ah! something is stirring there. I strain my eyes--the figure of a man passes slowly out of the shade, and silently occupies my place upon the wall. It must have been his lips that gave out that miserable sound.

What shall I do? Compassion and curiosity are strong. The man whose

heart can be rent so sorely ought not to be allowed to linger here with his despair. He is gazing, as I did, upon the lake. I mark his profile--clear-cut and symmetrical; I catch the lustre of large eyes. The face, as I can see it, seems very still and placid. I may be mistaken; he may merely be a wanderer like myself; perhaps he heard the three strange cries, and has also come to seek the cause. I feel impelled to speak to him.

I pass from the path by the church to the east side of the mausoleum, and so come toward him, the moon full upon his features. Great heaven! how pale his face is!

"Good-evening, sir. I thought myself alone here, and wondered that no other travellers had found their way to this lovely spot. Charming, is it not?"

For a moment he says nothing, but his eyes are full upon me. At last he replies:

"It is charming, as you say, Mr. Reginald Westcar."

"You know me?" I exclaim, in astonishment.

"Pardon me, I can scarcely claim a personal acquaintance. But yours is the only English name entered to-day in the *Livre des étrangers*."

"You are staying at the *Hôtel de la Concorde*, then?"

An inclination of the head is all the answer vouchsafed.

"May I ask," I continue, "whether you heard just now a very strange cry repeated three times?"

A pause. The lustrous eyes seem to search me through and through--I can hardly bear their gaze. Then he replies.

"I fancy I heard the echoes of some such sounds as you describe."

The \_echoes\_! Is this, then, the man who gave utterance to those cries of woe! is it possible? The face seems so passionless; but the pallor of those features bears witness to some terrible agony within.

"I thought some one must be in distress," I rejoin, hastily; "and I hurried back to see if I could be of any service."

"Very good of you," he answers, coldly; "but surely such a place as this is not unaccustomed to the voice of sorrow."

"No doubt. My impulse was a mistaken one."

"But kindly meant. You will not sleep less soundly for acting on that impulse, Reginald Westcar."

He rises as he speaks. He throws his cloak round him, and stands motionless. I take the hint. My mysterious countryman wishes to be alone. Some one that he has loved and lost lies buried here.

"Good-night, sir," I say, as I move in the direction of the little chapel at the gate. "Neither of us will sleep the less soundly for thinking of the perfect repose that reigns around this place."

"What do you mean?" he asks.

"The dead," I reply, as I stretch my hand toward the graves. "Do you not remember the lines in 'King Lear'?"

"'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.'"

"But you have never died, Reginald Westcar. You know nothing of the sleep of death."

For the third time he speaks my name almost familiarly, and--I know not why--a shudder passes through me. I have no time, in my turn, to ask him what he means; for he strides silently away into the shadow of the church, and I, with a strange sense of oppression upon me, returned to my hotel.

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The events which I have just related passed in vivid recollection through my mind as I travelled northward one cold November day in the year 185--. About six months previously I had taken my degree at Oxford, and had since been enjoying a trip upon the continent; and on my return to London I found a letter awaiting me from my lawyers, informing me somewhat to my astonishment, that I had succeeded to a small estate in Cumberland. I must tell you exactly how this came about. My mother was a Miss Ringwood, and she was the youngest of three children: the eldest was Aldina, the second was Geoffrey, and the third (my mother) Alice. Their mother (who had been a widow since my mother's birth) lived at this little place in Cumberland, and which was known as The Shallows; she died shortly after my mother's marriage with my father, Captain Westcar. My aunt Aldina and my uncle Geoffrey--the one at that time aged twenty-eight, and the other twenty-six--continued to reside at The Shallows. My father and mother had to go to India, where I was born, and where, when quite a child, I was left an orphan. A few months after my mother's marriage my aunt disappeared; a few weeks after that event, and my uncle Geoffrey dropped down dead, as he was playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, the proprietor of a neighboring mansion known as The Mere. A fortnight after my uncle's death, my aunt Aldina returned to The Shallows, and never left it again till she was carried out in her coffin to her grave in the churchyard. Ever since her return from her mysterious disappearance she maintained an impenetrable reserve. As a schoolboy I visited her twice or thrice, but these visits depressed my youthful spirits to such an extent, that as I grew older I excused myself from accepting my aunt's not very pressing invitations; and at the time I am now speaking of I had not seen her for eight or ten years. I was rather surprised, therefore, when she bequeathed me The Shallows, which, as the surviving child, she inherited under her mother's marriage settlement.

But The Shallows had always exercised a grim influence over me, and the knowledge that I was now going to it as my home oppressed me. The road seemed unusually dark, cold, and lonely. At last I passed the lodge, and two hundred yards more brought me to the porch. Very soon the door was

opened by an elderly female, whom I well remembered as having been my aunt's housekeeper and cook. I had pleasant recollections of her, and was glad to see her. To tell the truth, I had not anticipated my visit to my newly acquired property with any great degree of enthusiasm; but a very tolerable dinner had an inspiring effect, and I was pleased to learn that there was a bin of old Madeira in the cellar. Naturally I soon grew cheerful, and consequently talkative; and summoned Mrs. Balk for a little gossip. The substance of what I gathered from her rather diffusive conversation was as follows:

My aunt had resided at The Shallows ever since the death of my uncle Geoffrey, but she had maintained a silent and reserved habit; and Mrs. Balk was of opinion that she had had some great misfortune. She had persistently refused all intercourse with the people at The Mere. Squire Maryon, himself a cold and taciturn man, had once or twice showed a disposition to be friendly, but she had sternly repulsed all such overtures. Mrs. Balk was of opinion that Miss Ringwood was not "quite right," as she expressed it, on some topics; especially did she seem impressed with the idea that The Mere ought to belong to her. It appeared that the Ringwoods and Maryons were distant connections; that The Mere belonged in former times to a certain Sir Henry Benet; that he was a bachelor, and that Squire Maryon's father and old Mr. Ringwood were cousins of his, and that there was some doubt as to which was the real heir; that Sir Henry, who disliked old Maryon, had frequently said he had set any chance of dispute at rest, by bequeathing the Mere property by will to Mr. Ringwood, my mother's father; that, on his death, no such will could be found; and the family lawyers agreed that Mr. Maryon was the legal inheritor, and my uncle Geoffrey and his sisters must be content to take the Shallows, or nothing at all. Mr. Maryon was comparatively rich, and the Ringwoods poor, consequently they were advised not to enter upon a costly lawsuit. My aunt Aldina maintained to the last that Sir Henry had made a will, and that Mr. Maryon knew it, but had destroyed or suppressed the document. I did not gather from Mrs. Balk's narrative that Miss Ringwood had any foundation for her belief, and I dismissed the notion at once as baseless.

"And my uncle Geoffrey died of apoplexy, you say, Mrs. Balk?"

"\_I\_ don't say so, sir, no more did Miss Ringwood; but \_they\_ said so."

"Whom do you mean by \_they\_?"

"The people at The Mere--the young doctor, a friend of Squire Maryon's, who was brought over from York, and the rest; he fell heavily from his chair, and his head struck against the fender."

"Playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, I think you said."

"Yes, sir; he was too fond of cards, I believe, was Mr. Geoffrey."

"Is Mr. Maryon seen much in the county--is he hospitable?"

"Well, sir, he goes up to London a good deal, and has some friends down from town occasionally; but he does not seem to care much about the people in the neighborhood."

"He has some children, Mrs. Balk?"

"Only one daughter, sir; a sweet pretty thing she is. Her mother died when Miss Agnes was born."

"You have no idea, Mrs. Balk, what my aunt Aldina's great misfortune was?"

"Well, sir, I can't help thinking it must have been a love affair. She always hated men so much."

"Then why did she leave The Shallows to me, Mrs. Balk?"

"Ah, you are laughing, sir. No doubt she considered that The Mere ought to belong to you, as the heir of the Ringwoods, and she placed you here, as near as might be to the place."

"In hopes that I might marry Miss Maryon, eh, Mrs. Balk?"

"You are laughing again, sir. I don't imagine she thought so much of that, as of the possibility of your discovering something about the missing will."

I bade the communicative Mrs. Balk good night and retired to my bedroom--a low, wide, sombre, oak-panelled chamber. I must confess that family stories had no great interest for me, living apart from them at school and college as I had done; and as I undressed I thought more of the probabilities of sport the eight hundred acres of wild shooting belonging to The Shallows would afford me, than of the supposed will my poor aunt had evidently worried herself about so much. Thoroughly tired after my long journey, I soon fell fast asleep amid the deep shadows of the huge four-poster I mentally resolved to chop up into firewood at an early date, and substitute for it a more modern iron bedstead.

How long I had been asleep I do not know, but I suddenly started up, the echo of a long, sad cry ringing in my ears.

I listened eagerly--sensitive to the slightest sound--painfully sensitive as one is only in the deep silence of the night.

I heard the old-fashioned clock I had noticed on the stairs strike three. The reverberation seemed to last a long time, then all was silent again. "A dream," I muttered to myself, as I lay down upon the pillow; "Madeira is a heating wine. But what can I have been dreaming of?"

Sleep seemed to have gone altogether, and the busy mind wandered among the continental scenes I had lately visited. By and by I found myself in memory once more within the Weggis churchyard. I was satisfied; I had traced my dream to the cries that I had heard there. I turned round to sleep again. Perhaps I fell into a doze--I cannot say; but again I started up at the repetition, as it seemed outside my window, of that cry of sadness and despair. I hastily drew aside the heavy curtains of my bed--at that moment the room seemed to be illuminated with a dim, unearthly light--and I saw, gradually growing into human shape, the figure of a woman. I recognized in it my aunt, Miss Ringwood. Horror-struck, I gazed at the apparition; it advanced a little--the lips moved--I heard it distinctly say:



"\_Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!\_"

I fell back senseless.

When next I returned to consciousness, it was when I was called in the morning; the shutters were opened, and I saw the red light of the dawning winter sun.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a strange sympathy between the night and the mind. All one's troubles represent themselves as increased a hundredfold if one wakes in the night, and begins to think about them. A muscular pain becomes the certainty of an incurable internal disease; and a headache suggests incipient softening of the brain. But all these horrors are dissipated with the morning light, and the after-glow of a cold bath turns them into jokes. So it was with me on the morning after my arrival at The Shallows. I accounted most satisfactorily for all that had occurred, or seemed to have occurred, during the night; and resolved that, though the old Madeira was uncommonly good, I must be careful in future not to drink more than a couple of glasses after dinner. I need scarcely say that I said nothing to Mrs. Balk of my bad dreams, and shortly after breakfast I took my gun, and went out in search of such game as I might chance to meet with. At three o'clock I sent the keeper home, as his capacious pockets were pretty well filled, telling him that I thought I knew the country, and should stroll back leisurely. The gray gloom of the November evening was spreading over the sky as I came upon a small plantation which I believed belonged to me. I struck straight across it; emerging from its shadows, I found myself by a small stream and some marshy land; on the other side another small plantation. A snipe got up, I fired, and tailored it. I marked the bird into this other plantation, and followed. Up got a covey of partridges--bang, bang--one down by the side of an oak. I was about to enter this covert, when a lady and gentleman emerged, and, struck with the unpleasant thought that I was possibly trespassing, I at once went forward to apologize.

Before I could say a word, the gentleman addressed me.

"May I ask, sir, if I have given you permission to shoot over my preserves?"

"I beg to express my great regret, sir," I replied, as I lifted my hat in acknowledgment of the lady's presence, "that I should have trespassed upon your land. I can only plead, as my excuse, that I fully believed I was still upon the manor belonging to The Shallows."

"Gentlemen who go out shooting ought to know the limits of their estates," he answered harshly; "the boundaries of The Shallows are well defined, nor is the area they contain so very extensive. You have no right upon this side the stream, sir; oblige me by returning."

I merely bowed, for I was nettled by his tone, and as I turned away I noticed that the young lady whispered to him.

"One moment, sir," he said, "my daughter suggests the possibility of your being the new owner of The Shallows. May I ask if this is so?"

It had not occurred to me before, but I understood in a moment to whom I had been speaking, and I replied:

"Yes, Mr. Maryon--my name is Westcar."

Such was my introduction to Mr. and Miss Maryon. The proprietor of The Mere appeared to be a gentleman, but his manners were cold and reserved, and a careful observer might have remarked a perpetual restlessness in the eyes, as if they were physically incapable of regarding the same object for more than a moment. He was about sixty years of age, apparently; and though he now and again made an effort to carry himself upright, the head and shoulders soon drooped again, as if the weight of years, and, it might be, the memory of the past, were a heavy load to carry. Of Miss Maryon it is sufficient to say that she was nineteen or twenty, and it did not need a second glance to satisfy me that her beauty was of no ordinary kind.

I must hurry over the records of the next few weeks. I became a frequent visitor at The Mere. Mr. Maryon's manner never became cordial, but he did not seem displeased to see me; and as to Agnes,--well, she certainly was not displeased either.

I think it was on Christmas Day that I suddenly discovered that I was desperately in love. Miss Maryon had been for two or three days confined to her room by a bad cold, and I found myself in a great state of anxiety to see her again. I am sorry to say that my thoughts wandered a good deal when I was at church upon that festival, and I could not help thinking what ample room there was for a bridal procession up the spacious aisle. Suddenly my eyes rested upon a mural tablet, inscribed, "To the memory of Aldina Ringwood." Then with a cold thrill there came back upon me what I had almost forgotten, the dream, or whatever it was, that had occurred on that first night at The Shallows; and those strange words--"The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!" Nothing but the remembrance of Agnes' sweet face availed for the time to banish the vision, the statement, and the bidding.

Miss Maryon was soon down-stairs again. Did I flatter myself too much in thinking that she was as glad to see me as I was to see her? No--I felt sure that I did not. Then I began to reflect seriously upon my position. My fortune was small, quite enough for me, but not enough for two; and as she was heiress of The Mere and a comfortable rent-roll of some six or eight thousand a year, was it not natural that Mr. Maryon expected her to make what is called a "good match"? Still, I could not conceal from myself the fact, that he evinced no objection whatever to my frequent visits at his house, nor to my taking walks with his daughter when he was unable to accompany us.

One bright, frosty day I had been down to the lake with Miss Maryon, and had enjoyed the privilege of teaching her to skate; and on returning to the house, we met Mr. Maryon upon the terrace. He walked with us to the conservatory; we went in to examine the plants, and he remained outside, pacing up and down the terrace. Both Agnes and myself were strangely silent; perhaps my tongue had found an eloquence upon the ice which was well met by a shy thoughtfulness upon her part. But there was a lovely color upon her cheeks, and I experienced a very considerable and unusual fluttering about my heart. It happened as we were standing at the door

of the conservatory, both of us silently looking away from the flowers upon the frosty view, that our eyes lighted at the same time upon Mr. Maryon. He, too, was apparently regarding the prospect, when suddenly he paused and staggered back, as if something unexpected met his gaze.

"Oh, poor papa! I hope he is not going to have one of his fits!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Fits! Is he subject to such attacks?" I inquired.

"Not ordinary fits," she answered hurriedly; "I hardly know how to explain them. They come upon him occasionally, and generally at this period of the year."

"Shall we go to him?" I suggested.

"No; you cannot help him; and he cannot bear that they should be noticed."

We both watched him. His arms were stretched up above his head, and again he recoiled a step or two. I sought for an explanation in Agnes' face.

"A stranger!" she exclaimed. "Who can it be?"

I looked toward Mr. Maryon. A tall figure of a man had come from the farther side of the house; he wore a large, loose coat and a kind of military cap upon his head.

"Doubtless you are surprised to see me, John," we heard the new-comer say, in a confident voice, "but I am not the devil, man, that you should greet me with such a peculiar attitude." He held out his hand, and continued, "Come, don't let the warmth of old fellowship be all on one side, this wintry day."

We could see that Mr. Maryon took the proffered right hand with his left for an instant, then seemed to shrink away, but exchanged no word of this greeting.

"I don't understand this," said Agnes, and we both hurried forward. The stranger, seeing Agnes approach, lifted his cap.

"Ah, your daughter, John, no doubt. I see the likeness to her lamented mother. Pray introduce me."

Mr. Maryon's usually pallid features had assumed a still paler hue, and he said in a low voice:

"Colonel Bludyer--my daughter." Agnes barely bowed.

"Charmed to renew your acquaintance, Miss Maryon. When last I saw you, you were quite a baby; but your father and I are very old friends--are we not, John?"

Mr. Maryon vaguely nodded his head.

"Well, John, you have often pressed your hospitality upon me, but till

now I have never had an opportunity of availing myself of your kind offers; so I have brought my bag, and intend at last to give you the pleasure of my company for a few days."

I certainly should have thought that a man of Mr. Maryon's disposition would have resented such conduct as this, or, at all events, have given this self-invited guest a chilling welcome. Mr. Maryon, however, in a confused and somewhat stammering tone, said that he was glad Colonel Bludyer had come at last, and bade his daughter go and make the necessary arrangements. Agnes, in silent astonishment, entered the house, and then Mr. Maryon turned to me hastily and bade me good-by. In a by no means comfortable frame of mind I returned to The Shallows.

The sudden advent of this miscellaneous colonel was naturally somewhat irritating to me. Not only did I regard the man as an intolerable bore, but I could not help fancying that he was something more than an old friend of Mr. Maryon's; in fact, I was led to judge, by Mr. Maryon's strange conduct, that this Bludyer had some power over him which might be exercised to the detriment of the Maryon family, and I was convinced there was some mystery it was my business to penetrate.

The following day I went up to The Mere to see if Miss Maryon was desirous of renewing her skating lesson. I found the party in the billiard-room, Agnes marking for her father and the Colonel. Mr. Maryon, whom I knew to be an exceptionally good player, seemed incapable of making a decent stroke; the Colonel, on the other hand, could evidently give a professional fifteen, and beat him easily. We all went down to the lake together. I had no chance of any quiet conversation with Agnes; the Colonel was perpetually beside us.

I returned home disgusted. For two whole days I did not go near The Mere. On the third day I went up, hoping that the horrid Colonel would be gone. It was beginning to snow when I left The Shallows at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and Mrs. Balk foretold a heavy storm, and bade me not be late returning.

The black winter darkness in the sky deepened as I approached The Mere. I was ushered again into the billiard-room. Agnes was marking, as upon the previous occasion, but two days had worked a sad difference in her face. Mr. Maryon hardly noticed my entrance; he was flushed, and playing eagerly; the Colonel was boisterous, declaring that John had never played better twenty years ago. I relieved Agnes of the duty of marking. The snow fell in a thick layer upon the skylight, and the Colonel became seriously anxious about my return home. As I did not think he was the proper person to give me hints, I resolutely remained where I was, encouraged in my behavior by the few words I gained from Agnes, and by the looks of entreaty she gave me. I had always considered Mr. Maryon to be an abstemious man, but he drank a good deal of brandy and soda during the long game of seven hundred up, and when he succeeded in beating the Colonel by forty-three, he was in roaring spirits, and insisted upon my staying to dinner. Need I say that I accepted the invitation?

I made such toilet as I could in a most unattainable chamber that was allotted to me, and hurried back to the drawing-room in the hope that I might get a few private words with Agnes. I was not disappointed. She, too, had hurried down, and in a few words I learned that this abominable Bludyer was paying her his coarse attentions, and with,

apparently, the full consent of Mr. Maryon. My indignation was unbounded. Was it possible that Mr. Maryon intended to sacrifice this fair creature to that repulsive man?

Mr. Maryon had appeared in excellent spirits when dinner began, and the first glass or two of champagne made him merrier than I thought it possible for him to be. But by the time the dessert was on the table he had grown silent and thoughtful; nor did he respond to the warm eulogiums the Colonel passed upon the magnum of claret which was set before us.

After dinner we sat in the library. The Colonel left the room to fetch some cigars he had been loudly extolling. Then Agnes had an opportunity of whispering to me.

"Look at papa--see how strangely he sits--his hands clenching the arms of the chair, his eyes fixed upon the blazing coals! How old he seems to be to-night! His terrible fits are coming on--he is always like this toward the end of January!" The Colonel's return put an end to any further confidential talk.

When we separated for the night, I felt that my going to bed would be purposeless. I felt most painfully wide awake. I threw myself down upon my bed, and worried myself by trying to imagine what secret there could be between Maryon and Bludyer--for that a secret of some kind existed, I felt certain. I tossed about till I heard the stroke of one. A dreadful restlessness had come upon me. It seemed as if the solemn night-side of life was busy waking now, but the silence and solitude of my antique chamber became too much for me. I rose from my bed, and paced up and down the room. I raked up the dying embers of the fire, and drew an arm-chair to the hearth. I fell into a doze. By and by I woke up suddenly, and I was conscious of stealthy footsteps in the passage. My sense of hearing became painfully acute. I heard the footsteps retreating down the corridor, until they were lost in the distance. I cautiously opened the door, and, shading the candle with my hand, looked out--there was nothing to be seen; but I felt that I could not remain quietly in my room, and, closing the door behind me, I went out in search of I knew not what.

The sitting-rooms and bedrooms in ordinary use at The Mere were in the modern part of the house; but there was an old Elizabethan wing which I had often longed to explore, and in this strange ramble of mine I soon had reason to be satisfied that I was well within it. At the end of an oak-panelled narrow passage a door stood open, and I entered a low, sombre apartment fitted with furniture in the style of two hundred years ago. There was something awfully ghostly about the look of this room. A great four-post bedstead, with heavy hangings, stood in a deep recess; a round oak table and two high-backed chairs were in the centre of the room. Suddenly, as I gazed on these things, I heard stealthy footsteps in the passage, and saw a dim light advancing. Acting on a sudden impulse, I extinguished my candle and withdrew into the shadow of the recess, watching eagerly. The footsteps came nearer. My heart seemed to stand still with expectation. They paused outside the door, for a moment really--for an age it seemed to me. Then, to my astonishment, I saw Mr. Maryon enter. He carried a small night-lamp in his hand. Another glance satisfied me that he was walking in his sleep. He came straight to the round table, and set down the lamp. He seated himself in one of

the high-backed chairs, his vacant eyes staring at the chair opposite; then his lips began to move quickly, as if he were addressing some one. Then he rose, went to the bureau, and seemed to take something from it; then he sat down again. What a strange action of his hands! At first I could not understand it; then it flashed upon me that in this dream of his he must be shuffling cards. Yes, he began to deal; then he was playing with his adversary--his lips moving anxiously at times.

A look of terrible eagerness came over the sleepwalker's countenance. With nimble fingers he dealt the cards, and played. Suddenly with a sweep of his hand he seemed to fling the pack into the fireplace, started from his seat, grappled with his unseen adversary, raised his powerful right hand, and struck a tremendous blow. Hush! more footsteps along the passage! Am I deceived? From my concealment I watch for what is to follow. Colonel Bludyer comes in, half dressed, but wide awake.

"You maniac!" I hear him mutter: "I expected you were given to such tricks as these. Lucky for you no eyes but mine have seen your abject folly. Come back to your room."

Mr. Maryon is still gazing, his arms lifted wildly above his head, upon the imagined foe whom he had felled to the ground. The Colonel touches him on the shoulder, and leads him away, leaving the lamp. My reasoning faculties had fully returned to me. I held a clue to the secret, and for Agnes' sake it must be followed up. I took the lamp away, and placed it on a table where the chamber candlesticks stood, relit my own candle, and found my way back to my bedroom.

The next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I found Colonel Bludyer warming himself satisfactorily at the blazing fire. I learned from him that our host was far from well, and that Miss Maryon was in attendance upon her father; that the Colonel was charged with all kinds of apologies to me, and good wishes for my safe return home across the snow. I thanked him for the delivery of the message, while I felt perfectly convinced that he had never been charged with it. However that might be, I never saw Mr. Maryon that morning; and I started back to The Shallows through the snow.

For the next two or three days the weather was very wild, but I contrived to get up to The Mere, and ask after Mr. Maryon. Better, I was told, but unable to see any one. Miss Maryon, too, was fatigued with nursing her father. So there was nothing to do but to trudge home again.

"\_Reginald Westcar, The Mere is yours. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!\_"

Again and again these words forced themselves upon me, as I listlessly gazed out upon the white landscape. The strange scene that I had witnessed on that memorable night I passed beneath Mr. Maryon's roof had brought them back to my memory with redoubled force, and I began to think that the apparition I had seen--or dreamed of--on my first night at The Shallows had more of truth in it than I had been willing to believe.

Three more days passed away, and a carter-boy from The Mere brought me a note. It was Agnes' handwriting. It said:

"DEAR MR. WESTCAR: Pray come up here, if you possibly can. I cannot understand what is the matter with papa; and he wishes me to do a dreadful thing. Do come. I feel that I have no friend but you. I am obliged to send this note privately."

I need scarcely say that five minutes afterward I was plunging through the snow toward The Mere. It was already late on that dark February evening as I gained the shrubbery; and as I was pondering upon the best method of securing admittance, I became aware that the figure of a man was hurrying on some yards in front of me. At first I thought it must be one of the gardeners, but all of a sudden I stood still, and my blood seemed to freeze with horror, as I remarked that the figure in front of me \_left no trace of footmarks on the snow\_! My brain reeled for a moment, and I thought I should have fallen; but I recovered my nerves, and when I looked before me again, it had disappeared. I pressed on eagerly. I arrived at the front door--it was wide open; and I passed through the hall to the library. I heard Agnes' voice.

"No, no, papa. You must not force me to this! I cannot--will not--marry Colonel Bludyer!"

"You \_must\_," answered Mr. Maryon, in a hoarse voice; "you \_must\_ marry him, and save your father from something worse than disgrace!"

Not feeling disposed to play the eavesdropper, I entered the room. Mr. Maryon was standing at the fireplace. Agnes was crouching on the ground at his feet. I saw at once that it was no use for me to dissemble the reason of my visit, and, without a word of greeting, I said:

"Miss Maryon, I have come, in obedience to your summons. If I can prevent any misfortune from falling upon you I am ready to help you, with my life. You have guessed that I love you. If my love is returned I am prepared to dispute my claim with any man."

Agnes, with a cry of joy, rose from her knees, and rushed toward me. Ah! how strong I felt as I held her in my arms!

"I have my answer," I continued. "Mr. Maryon, I have reason to believe that your daughter is in fear of the future you have forecast for her. I ask you to regard those fears, and to give her to me, to love and cherish as my wife."

Mr. Maryon covered his face with his hands; and I could hear him murmur, "Too late--too late!"

"No, not too late," I echoed. "What is this Bludyer to you, that you should sacrifice your daughter to a man whose very look proclaims him a villain? Nothing can compel you to such a deed--not even a \_debt of honor\_!"

What it was impelled me to say these last words I know not, but they had an extraordinary effect upon Mr. Maryon. He started toward me, then checked himself; his face was livid, his eyeballs glaring, and he threw up his arms in the strange manner I had already witnessed.

"What is all this?" exclaimed a harsh voice behind me. "Mr. Westcar insulting Miss Maryon and her father! it is time for me to interfere."

And Colonel Bludyer approached me menacingly. All his jovial manner and fulsome courtesy was gone; and in his flushed face and insolent look the savage rascal was revealed.

"You will interfere at your peril," I replied. "I am a younger man than you are, and my strength has not been weakened by drink and dissipation. Take care."

The villain drew himself up to his full height; and, though he must have been at least some sixty years of age, I felt assured that I should meet no ordinary adversary if a personal struggle should ensue. Agnes fainted, and I laid her on a sofa.

"Miss Maryon wants air," said the Colonel, in a calmer voice. "Excuse me, Mr. Maryon, if I open a window." He tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash. "And now, Mr. Westcar, unless you are prepared to be sensible, and make your exit by the door, I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of throwing you out of the window."

The ruffian advanced toward me as he spoke. Suddenly he paused. His jaw dropped; his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his white lips quivered; he shook, as with an ague; his whole form appeared to shrink. I stared in amazement at the awful change. A strange thrill shot through me, as I heard a quiet voice say:

"Richard Bludyer, your grave is waiting for you. Go."

The figure of a man passed between me and him. The wretched man shrank back, and, with a wild cry, leaped from the window he had opened.

All this time Mr. Maryon was standing like a lifeless statue.

In helpless wonder I gazed at the figure before me. I saw clearly the features in profile, and, swift as lightning, my memory was carried back to the unforgotten scene in the churchyard upon the Lake of Lucerne, and I recognized the white face of the young man with whom I there had spoken.

"John Maryon," said the voice, "this is the night upon which, a quarter of a century ago, you killed me. It is your last night on earth. You must go through the tragedy again."

Mr. Maryon, still statue-like, beckoned to the figure, and opened a half-concealed door which led into his study. The strange but opportune visitant seemed to motion to me with a gesture of his hand, which I felt I must obey, and I followed in this weird procession. From the study we mounted by a private staircase to a large, well-furnished bed-chamber. Here we paused. Mr. Maryon looked tremblingly at the stranger, and said, in a low, stammering voice:

"This is my room. In this room, on this night, twenty-five years ago, you told me that you were certain Sir Henry Benet's will was in existence, and that you had made up your mind to dispute my possession to this property. You had discovered letters from Sir Henry to your father which gave you a clue to the spot where that will might be found. You, Geoffrey Ringwood, of generous and extravagant nature, offered to find the will in my presence. It was late at night, as now; all the



household slept. I accepted your invitation, and followed you."

Mr. Maryon ceased; he seemed physically unable to continue. The terrible stranger, in his low, echoing voice, replied:

"Go on; confess all."

"You and I, Geoffrey, had been what the world calls friends. We had been much in London together; we were both passionately fond of cards. We had a common acquaintance, Richard Bludyer. He was present on the 2d of February, when I lost a large sum of money to you at \_Carte\_. He hinted to me that you might possibly use these sums in instituting a lawsuit against me for the recovery of this estate. Your intimation that you knew of the existence of the will alarmed me, as it had become necessary for me to remain owner of The Mere. As I have said, I accepted your invitation, and followed you to Sir Henry Benet's room; and now I follow you again."

As he said these words, Geoffrey Ringwood, or his ghost, passed silently by Mr. Maryon, and led the way into the corridor. At the end of the corridor all three paused outside an oak door which I remembered well. A gesture from the leader made Mr. Maryon continue:

"On this threshold you told me suddenly that Bludyer was a villain, and had betrayed your sister Aldina; that she had fled with him that night; that he could never marry her, as you had reason to know he had a wife alive. You made me swear to help you in your vengeance against him. We entered the room, as we enter it now."

Our leader had opened the door of the room, and we were in the same chamber I had wandered to when I had slept at The Mere. The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood paused at the round table, and looked again at Mr. Maryon, who proceeded:

"You went straight to the fifth panel from the fireplace, and then touched a spring, and the panel opened. You said that the will giving this property to your father and his heirs was to be found there. I was convinced that you spoke the truth, but, suddenly remembering your love of gambling, I suggested that we should play for it. You accepted at once. We searched among the papers, and found the will. We placed the will upon the table, and began to play. We agreed that we would play up to ten thousand pounds. Your luck was marvellous. In two hours the limit was reached. I owed you ten thousand pounds, and had lost The Mere. You laughed, and said, 'Well, John, you have had a fair chance. At ten o'clock this morning I shall expect you to pay me \_your debt of honor\_.' I rose; the devil of despair strong upon me. With one hand I swept the cards from the table into the fire, and with the other seized you by the throat, and dealt you a blow upon the temple. You fell dead upon the floor."

Need I say that as I heard this fearful narrative, I recognized the actions of the sleep-walker, and understood them all?

"To the end!" said the hollow voice. "Confess to the end!"

"The doctor who examined your body gave his opinion, at the inquest, that you had died of apoplexy, caused by strong cerebral excitement. My

evidence was to the effect that I believed you had lost a very large sum of money to Captain Bludyer, and that you had told me you were utterly unable to pay it. The jury found their verdict accordingly, and I was left in undisturbed possession of The Mere. But the memory of my crime haunted me as only such memories can haunt a criminal, and I became a morose and miserable man. One thing bound me to life--my daughter. When Reginald Westcar appeared upon the scene I thought that the debt of honor would be satisfied if he married Agnes. Then Bludyer reappeared, and he told me that he knew that I had killed you. He threatened to revive the story, to exhume your body, and to say that Aldina Ringwood had told him all about the will. I could purchase his silence only by giving him my daughter, the heiress of The Mere. To this I consented."

As he said these last words, Mr. Maryon sunk heavily into the chair.

The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood placed one ghostly hand upon his left temple, and then passed silently out of the room. I started up, and followed the phantom along the corridor--down the staircase--out at the front door, which still stood open--across the snow-covered lawn--into the plantation; and then it disappeared as strangely as I first had seen it; and, hardly knowing whether I was mad or dreaming, I found my way back to The Shallows.

\* \* \* \* \*

For some weeks I was ill with brain-fever. When I recovered I was told that terrible things had happened at The Mere. Mr. Maryon had been found dead in Sir Henry Benet's room--an effusion of blood upon the brain, the doctors said--and the body of Colonel Bludyer had been discovered in the snow in an old disused gravel-pit not far from the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

A year afterward I married Agnes Maryon; and, if all that I had seen and heard upon that 3d of February was not merely the invention of a fevered brain, the debt of honor was at last discharged, for I, the nephew of the murdered Geoffrey Ringwood, became the owner of The Mere.

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***The Adventure Of The Beryl Coronet***  
by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"Holmes," said I as I stood one morning in our bow-window looking down the street, "here is a madman coming along. It seems rather sad that his relatives should allow him to come out alone."

My friend rose lazily from his armchair and stood with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown, looking over my shoulder. It

*was a bright, crisp February morning, and the snow of the day before still lay deep upon the ground, shimmering brightly in the wintry sun. Down the centre of Baker Street it had been ploughed into a brown crumbly band by the traffic, but at either side and on the heaped-up edges of the foot-paths it still lay as white as when it fell. The grey pavement had been cleaned and scraped, but was still dangerously slippery, so that there were fewer passengers than usual. Indeed, from the direction of the Metropolitan Station no one was coming save the single gentleman whose eccentric conduct had drawn my attention.*

*He was a man of about fifty, tall, portly, and imposing, with a massive, strongly marked face and a commanding figure. He was dressed in a sombre yet rich style, in black frock-coat, shining hat, neat brown gaiters, and well-cut pearl-grey trousers. Yet his actions were in absurd contrast to the dignity of his dress and features, for he was running hard, with occasional little springs, such as a weary man gives who is little accustomed to set any tax upon his legs. As he ran he jerked his hands up and down, wagged his head, and writhed his face into the most extraordinary contortions.*

*"What on earth can be the matter with him?" I asked. "He is looking up at the numbers of the houses."*

*"I believe that he is coming here," said Holmes, rubbing his hands.*

*"Here?"*

*"Yes; I rather think he is coming to consult me professionally. I think that I recognise the symptoms. Ha! did I not tell you?" As he spoke, the man, puffing and blowing, rushed at our door and pulled at our bell until the whole house resounded with the clanging.*

*A few moments later he was in our room, still puffing, still gesticulating, but with so fixed a look of grief and despair in his eyes that our smiles were turned in an instant to horror and pity. For a while he could not get his words out, but swayed his body and plucked at his hair like one who has been driven to the extreme limits of his reason. Then, suddenly springing to his feet, he beat his head against the wall with such force that we both rushed upon him and tore him away to the centre of the room. Sherlock Holmes pushed him down into the easy-chair and, sitting beside him, patted his hand and chatted with him in the easy, soothing tones which he knew so well how to employ.*

*"You have come to me to tell your story, have you not?" said he. "You are fatigued with your haste. Pray wait until you have recovered yourself, and then I shall be most happy to look into any little problem which you may submit to me."*

*The man sat for a minute or more with a heaving chest, fighting against his emotion. Then he passed his handkerchief over his brow, set his lips tight, and turned his face towards us.*

*"No doubt you think me mad?" said he.*

*"I see that you have had some great trouble," responded Holmes.*

*"God knows I have!--a trouble which is enough to unseat my reason, so sudden and so terrible is it. Public disgrace I might have faced, although I am a man whose character has never yet borne a stain. Private affliction also is the lot of every man; but the two coming together, and in so frightful a form, have been enough to shake my very soul. Besides, it is not I alone. The very noblest in the land may suffer unless some way be found out of this horrible affair."*

*"Pray compose yourself, sir," said Holmes, "and let me have a clear account of who you are and what it is that has befallen you."*

*"My name," answered our visitor, "is probably familiar to your ears. I am Alexander Holder, of the banking firm of Holder & Stevenson, of Threadneedle Street."*

*The name was indeed well known to us as belonging to the senior partner in the second largest private banking concern in the City of London. What could have happened, then, to bring one of the foremost citizens of London to this most pitiable pass? We waited, all curiosity, until with another effort he braced himself to tell his story.*

*"I feel that time is of value," said he; "that is why I hastened here when the police inspector suggested that I should secure your co-operation. I came to Baker Street by the Underground and hurried from there on foot, for the cabs go slowly through this snow. That is why I was so out of breath, for I am a man who takes very little exercise. I feel better now, and I will put the facts before you as shortly and yet as clearly as I can.*

*"It is, of course, well known to you that in a successful banking business as much depends upon our being able to find remunerative investments for our funds as upon our increasing our connection and the number of our depositors. One of our most lucrative means of laying out money is in the shape of loans, where the security is unimpeachable. We have done a good deal in this direction during the last few years, and there are many noble families to whom we have advanced large sums upon the security of their pictures, libraries, or plate.*

*"Yesterday morning I was seated in my office at the bank when a card was brought in to me by one of the clerks. I started when I saw the name, for it was that of none other than--well, perhaps even to you I had better say no more than that it was a name which is a household word all over the earth--one of the highest, noblest, most exalted names in England. I was overwhelmed by the honour and attempted, when he entered, to say so, but he plunged at once into business with the air of a man who wishes to hurry quickly through a disagreeable task.*

*"'Mr. Holder,' said he, 'I have been informed that you are in the habit of advancing money.'*

*"The firm does so when the security is good." I answered.*

*"It is absolutely essential to me," said he, "that I should have 50,000 pounds at once. I could, of course, borrow so trifling a sum ten times over from my friends, but I much prefer to make it a matter of business and to carry out that business myself. In my position you can readily understand that it is unwise to place one's self under obligations."*

*"For how long, may I ask, do you want this sum?" I asked.*

*"Next Monday I have a large sum due to me, and I shall then most certainly repay what you advance, with whatever interest you think it right to charge. But it is very essential to me that the money should be paid at once."*

*"I should be happy to advance it without further parley from my own private purse," said I, "were it not that the strain would be rather more than it could bear. If, on the other hand, I am to do it in the name of the firm, then in justice to my partner I must insist that, even in your case, every businesslike precaution should be taken."*

*"I should much prefer to have it so," said he, raising up a square, black morocco case which he had laid beside his chair. "You have doubtless heard of the Beryl Coronet?"*

*"One of the most precious public possessions of the empire," said I.*

*"Precisely." He opened the case, and there, imbedded in soft, flesh-coloured velvet, lay the magnificent piece of jewellery which he had named. "There are thirty-nine enormous beryls," said he, "and the price of the gold chasing is incalculable. The lowest estimate would put the worth of the coronet at double the sum which I have asked. I am prepared to leave it with you as my security."*

*"I took the precious case into my hands and looked in some perplexity from it to my illustrious client."*

*"You doubt its value?" he asked.*

*"Not at all. I only doubt--"*

*"The propriety of my leaving it. You may set your mind at rest about that. I should not dream of doing so were it not absolutely certain that I should be able in four days to reclaim it. It is a pure matter of form. Is the security sufficient?"*

*"Ample."*

*"You understand, Mr. Holder, that I am giving you a strong proof of the confidence which I have in you, founded upon all that I have heard of you. I rely upon you not only to be discreet and to refrain from all gossip upon the matter but, above all, to preserve this coronet with every possible precaution because I need not say that a great public scandal would be caused if any*

*harm were to befall it. Any injury to it would be almost as serious as its complete loss, for there are no beryls in the world to match these, and it would be impossible to replace them. I leave it with you, however, with every confidence, and I shall call for it in person on Monday morning.'*

*"Seeing that my client was anxious to leave, I said no more but, calling for my cashier, I ordered him to pay over fifty 1000 pound notes. When I was alone once more, however, with the precious case lying upon the table in front of me, I could not but think with some misgivings of the immense responsibility which it entailed upon me. There could be no doubt that, as it was a national possession, a horrible scandal would ensue if any misfortune should occur to it. I already regretted having ever consented to take charge of it. However, it was too late to alter the matter now, so I locked it up in my private safe and turned once more to my work.*

*"When evening came I felt that it would be an imprudence to leave so precious a thing in the office behind me. Bankers' safes had been forced before now, and why should not mine be? If so, how terrible would be the position in which I should find myself! I determined, therefore, that for the next few days I would always carry the case backward and forward with me, so that it might never be really out of my reach. With this intention, I called a cab and drove out to my house at Streatham, carrying the jewel with me. I did not breathe freely until I had taken it upstairs and locked it in the bureau of my dressing-room.*

*"And now a word as to my household, Mr. Holmes, for I wish you to thoroughly understand the situation. My groom and my page sleep out of the house, and may be set aside altogether. I have three maid-servants who have been with me a number of years and whose absolute reliability is quite above suspicion. Another, Lucy Parr, the second waiting-maid, has only been in my service a few months. She came with an excellent character, however, and has always given me satisfaction. She is a very pretty girl and has attracted admirers who have occasionally hung about the place. That is the only drawback which we have found to her, but we believe her to be a thoroughly good girl in every way.*

*"So much for the servants. My family itself is so small that it will not take me long to describe it. I am a widower and have an only son, Arthur. He has been a disappointment to me, Mr. Holmes--a grievous disappointment. I have no doubt that I am myself to blame. People tell me that I have spoiled him. Very likely I have. When my dear wife died I felt that he was all I had to love. I could not bear to see the smile fade even for a moment from his face. I have never denied him a wish. Perhaps it would have been better for both of us had I been sterner; but I meant it for the best.*

*"It was naturally my intention that he should succeed me in my business, but he was not of a business turn. He was wild, wayward, and, to speak the truth, I could not trust him in the handling of large sums of money. When he was young he became a member of an aristocratic club, and there, having charming manners, he was soon the intimate of a number of men with long*

*purses and expensive habits. He learned to play heavily at cards and to squander money on the turf, until he had again and again to come to me and implore me to give him an advance upon his allowance, that he might settle his debts of honour. He tried more than once to break away from the dangerous company which he was keeping, but each time the influence of his friend, Sir George Burnwell, was enough to draw him back again.*

*"And, indeed, I could not wonder that such a man as Sir George Burnwell should gain an influence over him, for he has frequently brought him to my house, and I have found myself that I could hardly resist the fascination of his manner. He is older than Arthur; a man of the world to his finger-tips, one who had been everywhere, seen everything, a brilliant talker, and a man of great personal beauty. Yet when I think of him in cold blood, far away from the glamour of his presence, I am convinced from his cynical speech and the look which I have caught in his eyes that he is one who should be deeply distrusted. So I think, and so, too, thinks my little Mary, who has a woman's quick insight into character.*

*"And now there is only she to be described. She is my niece; but when my brother died five years ago and left her alone in the world I adopted her; and have looked upon her ever since as my daughter. She is a sunbeam in my house--sweet, loving, beautiful, a wonderful manager and housekeeper; yet as tender and quiet and gentle as a woman could be. She is my right hand. I do not know what I could do without her. In only one matter has she ever gone against my wishes. Twice my boy has asked her to marry him, for he loves her devotedly, but each time she has refused him. I think that if anyone could have drawn him into the right path it would have been she, and that his marriage might have changed his whole life; but now, alas! it is too late--forever too late!*

*"Now, Mr. Holmes, you know the people who live under my roof, and I shall continue with my miserable story.*

*"When we were taking coffee in the drawing-room that night after dinner, I told Arthur and Mary my experience, and of the precious treasure which we had under our roof, suppressing only the name of my client. Lucy Parr, who had brought in the coffee, had, I am sure, left the room; but I cannot swear that the door was closed. Mary and Arthur were much interested and wished to see the famous coronet, but I thought it better not to disturb it.*

*"Where have you put it?' asked Arthur.*

*"In my own bureau.'*

*"Well, I hope to goodness the house won't be burgled during the night.' said he.*

*"It is locked up,' I answered.*

*"Oh, any old key will fit that bureau. When I was a youngster I have opened it myself with the key of the box-room cupboard.'*

*"He often had a wild way of talking, so that I thought little of*

*what he said. He followed me to my room, however; that night with a very grave face.*

*"Look here, dad," said he with his eyes cast down, 'can you let me have 200 pounds?'*

*"No, I cannot!" I answered sharply. 'I have been far too generous with you in money matters.'*

*"You have been very kind," said he, 'but I must have this money, or else I can never show my face inside the club again.'*

*"And a very good thing, too!" I cried.*

*"Yes, but you would not have me leave it a dishonoured man," said he. 'I could not bear the disgrace. I must raise the money in some way, and if you will not let me have it, then I must try other means.'*

*"I was very angry, for this was the third demand during the month. 'You shall not have a farthing from me,' I cried, on which he bowed and left the room without another word.*

*"When he was gone I unlocked my bureau, made sure that my treasure was safe, and locked it again. Then I started to go round the house to see that all was secure--a duty which I usually leave to Mary but which I thought it well to perform myself that night. As I came down the stairs I saw Mary herself at the side window of the hall, which she closed and fastened as I approached.*

*"Tell me, dad," said she, looking, I thought, a little disturbed, 'did you give Lucy, the maid, leave to go out to-night?'*

*"Certainly not."*

*"She came in just now by the back door. I have no doubt that she has only been to the side gate to see someone, but I think that it is hardly safe and should be stopped."*

*"You must speak to her in the morning, or I will if you prefer it. Are you sure that everything is fastened?'*

*"Quite sure, dad."*

*"Then, good-night." I kissed her and went up to my bedroom again, where I was soon asleep.*

*"I am endeavouring to tell you everything, Mr. Holmes, which may have any bearing upon the case, but I beg that you will question me upon any point which I do not make clear."*

*"On the contrary, your statement is singularly lucid."*

*"I come to a part of my story now in which I should wish to be particularly so. I am not a very heavy sleeper, and the anxiety in my mind tended, no doubt, to make me even less so than usual.*



*About two in the morning, then, I was awakened by some sound in the house. It had ceased ere I was wide awake, but it had left an impression behind it as though a window had gently closed somewhere. I lay listening with all my ears. Suddenly, to my horror, there was a distinct sound of footsteps moving softly in the next room. I slipped out of bed, all palpitating with fear, and peeped round the corner of my dressing-room door.*

*"Arthur!" I screamed, 'you villain! you thief! How dare you touch that coronet?'*

*"The gas was half up, as I had left it, and my unhappy boy, dressed only in his shirt and trousers, was standing beside the light, holding the coronet in his hands. He appeared to be wrenching at it, or bending it with all his strength. At my cry he dropped it from his grasp and turned as pale as death. I snatched it up and examined it. One of the gold corners, with three of the beryls in it, was missing.*

*"You blackguard!" I shouted, beside myself with rage. 'You have destroyed it! You have dishonoured me forever! Where are the jewels which you have stolen?'*

*"Stolen!" he cried.*

*"Yes, thief!" I roared, shaking him by the shoulder.*

*"There are none missing. There cannot be any missing," said he.*

*"There are three missing. And you know where they are. Must I call you a liar as well as a thief? Did I not see you trying to tear off another piece?"*

*"You have called me names enough," said he, 'I will not stand it any longer. I shall not say another word about this business, since you have chosen to insult me. I will leave your house in the morning and make my own way in the world.'*

*"You shall leave it in the hands of the police!" I cried half-mad with grief and rage. 'I shall have this matter probed to the bottom.'*

*"You shall learn nothing from me," said he with a passion such as I should not have thought was in his nature. 'If you choose to call the police, let the police find what they can.'*

*"By this time the whole house was astir; for I had raised my voice in my anger. Mary was the first to rush into my room, and, at the sight of the coronet and of Arthur's face, she read the whole story and, with a scream, fell down senseless on the ground. I sent the house-maid for the police and put the investigation into their hands at once. When the inspector and a constable entered the house, Arthur, who had stood sullenly with his arms folded, asked me whether it was my intention to charge him with theft. I answered that it had ceased to be a private matter, but had become a public one, since the ruined coronet was national property. I was determined that the law should have its way in everything.*

*"At least," said he, 'you will not have me arrested at once. It would be to your advantage as well as mine if I might leave the house for five minutes.'*

*"That you may get away, or perhaps that you may conceal what you have stolen," said I. And then, realising the dreadful position in which I was placed, I implored him to remember that not only my honour but that of one who was far greater than I was at stake; and that he threatened to raise a scandal which would convulse the nation. He might avert it all if he would but tell me what he had done with the three missing stones.*

*"You may as well face the matter," said I; 'you have been caught in the act, and no confession could make your guilt more heinous. If you but make such reparation as is in your power, by telling us where the beryls are, all shall be forgiven and forgotten.'*

*"Keep your forgiveness for those who ask for it," he answered, turning away from me with a sneer. I saw that he was too hardened for any words of mine to influence him. There was but one way for it. I called in the inspector and gave him into custody. A search was made at once not only of his person but of his room and of every portion of the house where he could possibly have concealed the gems; but no trace of them could be found, nor would the wretched boy open his mouth for all our persuasions and our threats. This morning he was removed to a cell, and I, after going through all the police formalities, have hurried round to you to implore you to use your skill in unravelling the matter. The police have openly confessed that they can at present make nothing of it. You may go to any expense which you think necessary. I have already offered a reward of 1000 pounds. My God, what shall I do! I have lost my honour, my gems, and my son in one night. Oh, what shall I do!"*

*He put a hand on either side of his head and rocked himself to and fro, droning to himself like a child whose grief has got beyond words.*

*Sherlock Holmes sat silent for some few minutes, with his brows knitted and his eyes fixed upon the fire.*

*"Do you receive much company?" he asked.*

*"None save my partner with his family and an occasional friend of Arthur's. Sir George Burnwell has been several times lately. No one else, I think."*

*"Do you go out much in society?"*

*"Arthur does. Mary and I stay at home. We neither of us care for it."*

*"That is unusual in a young girl."*

*"She is of a quiet nature. Besides, she is not so very young. She is four-and-twenty."*

*"This matter, from what you say, seems to have been a shock to her also."*

*"Terrible! She is even more affected than I."*

*"You have neither of you any doubt as to your son's guilt?"*

*"How can we have when I saw him with my own eyes with the coronet in his hands."*

*"I hardly consider that a conclusive proof. Was the remainder of the coronet at all injured?"*

*"Yes, it was twisted."*

*"Do you not think, then, that he might have been trying to straighten it?"*

*"God bless you! You are doing what you can for him and for me. But it is too heavy a task. What was he doing there at all? If his purpose were innocent, why did he not say so?"*

*"Precisely. And if it were guilty, why did he not invent a lie? His silence appears to me to cut both ways. There are several singular points about the case. What did the police think of the noise which awoke you from your sleep?"*

*"They considered that it might be caused by Arthur's closing his bedroom door."*

*"A likely story! As if a man bent on felony would slam his door so as to wake a household. What did they say, then, of the disappearance of these gems?"*

*"They are still sounding the planking and probing the furniture in the hope of finding them."*

*"Have they thought of looking outside the house?"*

*"Yes, they have shown extraordinary energy. The whole garden has already been minutely examined."*

*"Now, my dear sir," said Holmes. "is it not obvious to you now that this matter really strikes very much deeper than either you or the police were at first inclined to think? It appeared to you to be a simple case; to me it seems exceedingly complex. Consider what is involved by your theory. You suppose that your son came down from his bed, went, at great risk, to your dressing-room, opened your bureau, took out your coronet, broke off by main force a small portion of it, went off to some other place, concealed three gems out of the thirty-nine, with such skill that nobody can find them, and then returned with the other thirty-six into the room in which he exposed himself to the greatest danger of being discovered. I ask you now, is such a theory tenable?"*

*"But what other is there?" cried the banker with a gesture of despair. "If his motives were innocent, why does he not explain them?"*

*"It is our task to find that out," replied Holmes; "so now, if you please, Mr. Holder, we will set off for Streatham together, and devote an hour to glancing a little more closely into details."*

*My friend insisted upon my accompanying them in their expedition, which I was eager enough to do, for my curiosity and sympathy were deeply stirred by the story to which we had listened. I confess that the guilt of the banker's son appeared to me to be as obvious as it did to his unhappy father; but still I had such faith in Holmes' judgment that I felt that there must be some grounds for hope as long as he was dissatisfied with the accepted explanation. He hardly spoke a word the whole way out to the southern suburb, but sat with his chin upon his breast and his hat drawn over his eyes, sunk in the deepest thought. Our client appeared to have taken fresh heart at the little glimpse of hope which had been presented to him, and he even broke into a desultory chat with me over his business affairs. A short railway journey and a shorter walk brought us to Fairbank, the modest residence of the great financier.*

*Fairbank was a good-sized square house of white stone, standing back a little from the road. A double carriage-sweep, with a snow-clad lawn, stretched down in front to two large iron gates which closed the entrance. On the right side was a small wooden thicket, which led into a narrow path between two neat hedges stretching from the road to the kitchen door; and forming the tradesmen's entrance. On the left ran a lane which led to the stables, and was not itself within the grounds at all, being a public, though little used, thoroughfare. Holmes left us standing at the door and walked slowly all round the house, across the front, down the tradesmen's path, and so round by the garden behind into the stable lane. So long was he that Mr. Holder and I went into the dining-room and waited by the fire until he should return. We were sitting there in silence when the door opened and a young lady came in. She was rather above the middle height, slim, with dark hair and eyes, which seemed the darker against the absolute pallor of her skin. I do not think that I have ever seen such deadly paleness in a woman's face. Her lips, too, were bloodless, but her eyes were flushed with crying. As she swept silently into the room she impressed me with a greater sense of grief than the banker had done in the morning, and it was the more striking in her as she was evidently a woman of strong character; with immense capacity for self-restraint. Disregarding my presence, she went straight to her uncle and passed her hand over his head with a sweet womanly caress.*

*"You have given orders that Arthur should be liberated, have you not, dad?" she asked.*

*"No, no, my girl, the matter must be probed to the bottom."*

*"But I am so sure that he is innocent. You know what woman's instincts are. I know that he has done no harm and that you will be sorry for having acted so harshly."*

*"Why is he silent, then, if he is innocent?"*

*"Who knows? Perhaps because he was so angry that you should suspect him."*

*"How could I help suspecting him, when I actually saw him with the coronet in his hand?"*

*"Oh, but he had only picked it up to look at it. Oh, do, do take my word for it that he is innocent. Let the matter drop and say no more. It is so dreadful to think of our dear Arthur in prison!"*

*"I shall never let it drop until the gems are found--never, Mary! Your affection for Arthur blinds you as to the awful consequences to me. Far from hushing the thing up, I have brought a gentleman down from London to inquire more deeply into it."*

*"This gentleman?" she asked, facing round to me.*

*"No, his friend. He wished us to leave him alone. He is round in the stable lane now."*

*"The stable lane?" She raised her dark eyebrows. "What can he hope to find there? Ah! this, I suppose, is he. I trust, sir, that you will succeed in proving, what I feel sure is the truth, that my cousin Arthur is innocent of this crime."*

*"I fully share your opinion, and I trust, with you, that we may prove it," returned Holmes, going back to the mat to knock the snow from his shoes. "I believe I have the honour of addressing Miss Mary Holder. Might I ask you a question or two?"*

*"Pray do, sir, if it may help to clear this horrible affair up."*

*"You heard nothing yourself last night?"*

*"Nothing, until my uncle here began to speak loudly. I heard that, and I came down."*

*"You shut up the windows and doors the night before. Did you fasten all the windows?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Were they all fastened this morning?"*

*"Yes."*

*"You have a maid who has a sweetheart? I think that you remarked to your uncle last night that she had been out to see him?"*

*"Yes, and she was the girl who waited in the drawing-room, and who may have heard uncle's remarks about the coronet."*

*"I see. You infer that she may have gone out to tell her sweetheart, and that the two may have planned the robbery."*

*"But what is the good of all these vague theories," cried the*

banker impatiently, "when I have told you that I saw Arthur with the coronet in his hands?"

"Wait a little, Mr. Holder. We must come back to that. About this girl, Miss Holder. You saw her return by the kitchen door; I presume?"

"Yes; when I went to see if the door was fastened for the night I met her slipping in. I saw the man, too, in the gloom."

"Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes! he is the green-grocer who brings our vegetables round. His name is Francis Prosper."

"He stood," said Holmes, "to the left of the door--that is to say, farther up the path than is necessary to reach the door?"

"Yes, he did."

"And he is a man with a wooden leg?"

Something like fear sprang up in the young lady's expressive black eyes. "Why, you are like a magician," said she. "How do you know that?" She smiled, but there was no answering smile in Holmes' thin, eager face.

"I should be very glad now to go upstairs," said he. "I shall probably wish to go over the outside of the house again. Perhaps I had better take a look at the lower windows before I go up."

He walked swiftly round from one to the other, pausing only at the large one which looked from the hall onto the stable lane. This he opened and made a very careful examination of the sill with his powerful magnifying lens. "Now we shall go upstairs," said he at last.

The banker's dressing-room was a plainly furnished little chamber; with a grey carpet, a large bureau, and a long mirror. Holmes went to the bureau first and looked hard at the lock.

"Which key was used to open it?" he asked.

"That which my son himself indicated--that of the cupboard of the lumber-room."

"Have you it here?"

"That is it on the dressing-table."

Sherlock Holmes took it up and opened the bureau.

"It is a noiseless lock," said he. "It is no wonder that it did not wake you. This case, I presume, contains the coronet. We must have a look at it." He opened the case, and taking out the diadem he laid it upon the table. It was a magnificent specimen of the jeweller's art, and the thirty-six stones were the finest that I have ever seen. At one side of the coronet was a cracked edge,

*where a corner holding three gems had been torn away.*

*"Now, Mr. Holder," said Holmes, "here is the corner which corresponds to that which has been so unfortunately lost. Might I beg that you will break it off?"*

*The banker recoiled in horror. "I should not dream of trying," said he.*

*"Then I will." Holmes suddenly bent his strength upon it, but without result. "I feel it give a little," said he; "but, though I am exceptionally strong in the fingers, it would take me all my time to break it. An ordinary man could not do it. Now, what do you think would happen if I did break it, Mr. Holder? There would be a noise like a pistol shot. Do you tell me that all this happened within a few yards of your bed and that you heard nothing of it?"*

*"I do not know what to think. It is all dark to me."*

*"But perhaps it may grow lighter as we go. What do you think, Miss Holder?"*

*"I confess that I still share my uncle's perplexity."*

*"Your son had no shoes or slippers on when you saw him?"*

*"He had nothing on save only his trousers and shirt."*

*"Thank you. We have certainly been favoured with extraordinary luck during this inquiry, and it will be entirely our own fault if we do not succeed in clearing the matter up. With your permission, Mr. Holder, I shall now continue my investigations outside."*

*He went alone, at his own request, for he explained that any unnecessary footmarks might make his task more difficult. For an hour or more he was at work, returning at last with his feet heavy with snow and his features as inscrutable as ever.*

*"I think that I have seen now all that there is to see, Mr. Holder," said he; "I can serve you best by returning to my rooms."*

*"But the gems, Mr. Holmes. Where are they?"*

*"I cannot tell."*

*The banker wrung his hands. "I shall never see them again!" he cried. "And my son? You give me hopes?"*

*"My opinion is in no way altered."*

*"Then, for God's sake, what was this dark business which was acted in my house last night?"*

*"If you can call upon me at my Baker Street rooms to-morrow morning between nine and ten I shall be happy to do what I can to*

*make it clearer. I understand that you give me carte blanche to act for you, provided only that I get back the gems, and that you place no limit on the sum I may draw."*

*"I would give my fortune to have them back."*

*"Very good. I shall look into the matter between this and then. Good-bye; it is just possible that I may have to come over here again before evening."*

*It was obvious to me that my companion's mind was now made up about the case, although what his conclusions were was more than I could even dimly imagine. Several times during our homeward journey I endeavoured to sound him upon the point, but he always glided away to some other topic, until at last I gave it over in despair. It was not yet three when we found ourselves in our rooms once more. He hurried to his chamber and was down again in a few minutes dressed as a common loafer. With his collar turned up, his shiny, seedy coat, his red cravat, and his worn boots, he was a perfect sample of the class.*

*"I think that this should do," said he, glancing into the glass above the fireplace. "I only wish that you could come with me, Watson, but I fear that it won't do. I may be on the trail in this matter, or I may be following a will-o'-the-wisp, but I shall soon know which it is. I hope that I may be back in a few hours." He cut a slice of beef from the joint upon the sideboard, sandwiched it between two rounds of bread, and thrusting this rude meal into his pocket he started off upon his expedition.*

*I had just finished my tea when he returned, evidently in excellent spirits, swinging an old elastic-sided boot in his hand. He chucked it down into a corner and helped himself to a cup of tea.*

*"I only looked in as I passed," said he. "I am going right on."*

*"Where to?"*

*"Oh, to the other side of the West End. It may be some time before I get back. Don't wait up for me in case I should be late."*

*"How are you getting on?"*

*"Oh, so so. Nothing to complain of. I have been out to Streatham since I saw you last, but I did not call at the house. It is a very sweet little problem, and I would not have missed it for a good deal. However, I must not sit gossiping here, but must get these disreputable clothes off and return to my highly respectable self."*

*I could see by his manner that he had stronger reasons for satisfaction than his words alone would imply. His eyes twinkled, and there was even a touch of colour upon his fallow cheeks. He hastened upstairs, and a few minutes later I heard the slam of the hall door, which told me that he was off once more upon his congenial hunt.*



*I waited until midnight, but there was no sign of his return, so I retired to my room. It was no uncommon thing for him to be away for days and nights on end when he was hot upon a scent, so that his lateness caused me no surprise. I do not know at what hour he came in, but when I came down to breakfast in the morning there he was with a cup of coffee in one hand and the paper in the other, as fresh and trim as possible.*

*"You will excuse my beginning without you, Watson," said he, "but you remember that our client has rather an early appointment this morning."*

*"Why, it is after nine now," I answered. "I should not be surprised if that were he. I thought I heard a ring."*

*It was, indeed, our friend the financier. I was shocked by the change which had come over him, for his face which was naturally of a broad and massive mould, was now pinched and fallen in, while his hair seemed to me at least a shade whiter. He entered with a weariness and lethargy which was even more painful than his violence of the morning before, and he dropped heavily into the armchair which I pushed forward for him.*

*"I do not know what I have done to be so severely tried," said he. "Only two days ago I was a happy and prosperous man, without a care in the world. Now I am left to a lonely and dishonoured age. One sorrow comes close upon the heels of another. My niece, Mary, has deserted me."*

*"Deserted you?"*

*"Yes. Her bed this morning had not been slept in, her room was empty, and a note for me lay upon the hall table. I had said to her last night, in sorrow and not in anger, that if she had married my boy all might have been well with him. Perhaps it was thoughtless of me to say so. It is to that remark that she refers in this note:*

*"MY DEAREST UNCLE:--I feel that I have brought trouble upon you, and that if I had acted differently this terrible misfortune might never have occurred. I cannot, with this thought in my mind, ever again be happy under your roof; and I feel that I must leave you forever. Do not worry about my future, for that is provided for; and, above all, do not search for me, for it will be fruitless labour and an ill-service to me. In life or in death, I am ever your loving,--MARY."*

*"What could she mean by that note, Mr. Holmes? Do you think it points to suicide?"*

*"No, no, nothing of the kind. It is perhaps the best possible solution. I trust, Mr. Holder, that you are nearing the end of your troubles."*

*"Ha! You say so! You have heard something, Mr. Holmes; you have learned something! Where are the gems?"*

*"You would not think 1000 pounds apiece an excessive sum for them?"*

*"I would pay ten."*

*"That would be unnecessary. Three thousand will cover the matter. And there is a little reward, I fancy. Have you your check-book? Here is a pen. Better make it out for 4000 pounds."*

*With a dazed face the banker made out the required check. Holmes walked over to his desk, took out a little triangular piece of gold with three gems in it, and threw it down upon the table.*

*With a shriek of joy our client clutched it up.*

*"You have it!" he gasped. "I am saved! I am saved!"*

*The reaction of joy was as passionate as his grief had been, and he hugged his recovered gems to his bosom.*

*"There is one other thing you owe, Mr. Holder," said Sherlock Holmes rather sternly.*

*"Owe!" He caught up a pen. "Name the sum, and I will pay it."*

*"No, the debt is not to me. You owe a very humble apology to that noble lad, your son, who has carried himself in this matter as I should be proud to see my own son do, should I ever chance to have one."*

*"Then it was not Arthur who took them?"*

*"I told you yesterday, and I repeat to-day, that it was not."*

*"You are sure of it! Then let us hurry to him at once to let him know that the truth is known."*

*"He knows it already. When I had cleared it all up I had an interview with him, and finding that he would not tell me the story, I told it to him, on which he had to confess that I was right and to add the very few details which were not yet quite clear to me. Your news of this morning, however, may open his lips."*

*"For heaven's sake, tell me, then, what is this extraordinary mystery!"*

*"I will do so, and I will show you the steps by which I reached it. And let me say to you, first, that which it is hardest for me to say and for you to hear: there has been an understanding between Sir George Burnwell and your niece Mary. They have now fled together."*

*"My Mary? Impossible!"*

*"It is unfortunately more than possible; it is certain. Neither you nor your son knew the true character of this man when you admitted him into your family circle. He is one of the most*

*dangerous men in England--a ruined gambler; an absolutely desperate villain, a man without heart or conscience. Your niece knew nothing of such men. When he breathed his vows to her; as he had done to a hundred before her; she flattered herself that she alone had touched his heart. The devil knows best what he said, but at least she became his tool and was in the habit of seeing him nearly every evening."*

*"I cannot, and I will not, believe it!" cried the banker with an ashen face.*

*"I will tell you, then, what occurred in your house last night. Your niece, when you had, as she thought, gone to your room, slipped down and talked to her lover through the window which leads into the stable lane. His footmarks had pressed right through the snow, so long had he stood there. She told him of the coronet. His wicked lust for gold kindled at the news, and he bent her to his will. I have no doubt that she loved you, but there are women in whom the love of a lover extinguishes all other loves, and I think that she must have been one. She had hardly listened to his instructions when she saw you coming downstairs, on which she closed the window rapidly and told you about one of the servants' escapade with her wooden-legged lover; which was all perfectly true.*

*"Your boy, Arthur; went to bed after his interview with you but he slept badly on account of his uneasiness about his club debts. In the middle of the night he heard a soft tread pass his door; so he rose and, looking out, was surprised to see his cousin walking very stealthily along the passage until she disappeared into your dressing-room. Petrified with astonishment, the lad slipped on some clothes and waited there in the dark to see what would come of this strange affair. Presently she emerged from the room again, and in the light of the passage-lamp your son saw that she carried the precious coronet in her hands. She passed down the stairs, and he, thrilling with horror; ran along and slipped behind the curtain near your door; whence he could see what passed in the hall beneath. He saw her stealthily open the window, hand out the coronet to someone in the gloom, and then closing it once more hurry back to her room, passing quite close to where he stood hid behind the curtain.*

*"As long as she was on the scene he could not take any action without a horrible exposure of the woman whom he loved. But the instant that she was gone he realised how crushing a misfortune this would be for you, and how all-important it was to set it right. He rushed down, just as he was, in his bare feet, opened the window, sprang out into the snow, and ran down the lane, where he could see a dark figure in the moonlight. Sir George Burnwell tried to get away, but Arthur caught him, and there was a struggle between them, your lad tugging at one side of the coronet, and his opponent at the other. In the scuffle, your son struck Sir George and cut him over the eye. Then something suddenly snapped, and your son, finding that he had the coronet in his hands, rushed back, closed the window, ascended to your room, and had just observed that the coronet had been twisted in the struggle and was endeavouring to straighten it when you appeared upon the scene."*

*"Is it possible?" gasped the banker.*

*"You then roused his anger by calling him names at a moment when he felt that he had deserved your warmest thanks. He could not explain the true state of affairs without betraying one who certainly deserved little enough consideration at his hands. He took the more chivalrous view, however, and preserved her secret."*

*"And that was why she shrieked and fainted when she saw the coronet," cried Mr. Holder. "Oh, my God! what a blind fool I have been! And his asking to be allowed to go out for five minutes! The dear fellow wanted to see if the missing piece were at the scene of the struggle. How cruelly I have misjudged him!"*

*"When I arrived at the house," continued Holmes, "I at once went very carefully round it to observe if there were any traces in the snow which might help me. I knew that none had fallen since the evening before, and also that there had been a strong frost to preserve impressions. I passed along the tradesmen's path, but found it all trampled down and indistinguishable. Just beyond it, however, at the far side of the kitchen door, a woman had stood and talked with a man, whose round impressions on one side showed that he had a wooden leg. I could even tell that they had been disturbed, for the woman had run back swiftly to the door, as was shown by the deep toe and light heel marks, while Wooden-leg had waited a little, and then had gone away. I thought at the time that this might be the maid and her sweetheart, of whom you had already spoken to me, and inquiry showed it was so. I passed round the garden without seeing anything more than random tracks, which I took to be the police; but when I got into the stable lane a very long and complex story was written in the snow in front of me.*

*"There was a double line of tracks of a booted man, and a second double line which I saw with delight belonged to a man with naked feet. I was at once convinced from what you had told me that the latter was your son. The first had walked both ways, but the other had run swiftly, and as his tread was marked in places over the depression of the boot, it was obvious that he had passed after the other. I followed them up and found they led to the hall window, where Boots had worn all the snow away while waiting. Then I walked to the other end, which was a hundred yards or more down the lane. I saw where Boots had faced round, where the snow was cut up as though there had been a struggle, and, finally, where a few drops of blood had fallen, to show me that I was not mistaken. Boots had then run down the lane, and another little smudge of blood showed that it was he who had been hurt. When he came to the highroad at the other end, I found that the pavement had been cleared, so there was an end to that clue.*

*"On entering the house, however, I examined, as you remember, the sill and framework of the hall window with my lens, and I could at once see that someone had passed out. I could distinguish the outline of an instep where the wet foot had been placed in coming in. I was then beginning to be able to form an opinion as to what had occurred. A man had waited outside the window; someone had*

*brought the gems; the deed had been overseen by your son; he had pursued the thief; had struggled with him; they had each tugged at the coronet, their united strength causing injuries which neither alone could have effected. He had returned with the prize, but had left a fragment in the grasp of his opponent. So far I was clear. The question now was, who was the man and who was it brought him the coronet?*

*"It is an old maxim of mine that when you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Now, I knew that it was not you who had brought it down, so there only remained your niece and the maids. But if it were the maids, why should your son allow himself to be accused in their place? There could be no possible reason. As he loved his cousin, however, there was an excellent explanation why he should retain her secret--the more so as the secret was a disgraceful one. When I remembered that you had seen her at that window, and how she had fainted on seeing the coronet again, my conjecture became a certainty.*

*"And who could it be who was her confederate? A lover evidently, for who else could outweigh the love and gratitude which she must feel to you? I knew that you went out little, and that your circle of friends was a very limited one. But among them was Sir George Burnwell. I had heard of him before as being a man of evil reputation among women. It must have been he who wore those boots and retained the missing gems. Even though he knew that Arthur had discovered him, he might still flatter himself that he was safe, for the lad could not say a word without compromising his own family.*

*"Well, your own good sense will suggest what measures I took next. I went in the shape of a loafer to Sir George's house, managed to pick up an acquaintance with his valet, learned that his master had cut his head the night before, and, finally, at the expense of six shillings, made all sure by buying a pair of his cast-off shoes. With these I journeyed down to Streatham and saw that they exactly fitted the tracks."*

*"I saw an ill-dressed vagabond in the lane yesterday evening," said Mr. Holder.*

*"Precisely. It was I. I found that I had my man, so I came home and changed my clothes. It was a delicate part which I had to play then, for I saw that a prosecution must be avoided to avert scandal, and I knew that so astute a villain would see that our hands were tied in the matter. I went and saw him. At first, of course, he denied everything. But when I gave him every particular that had occurred, he tried to bluster and took down a life-preserver from the wall. I knew my man, however, and I clapped a pistol to his head before he could strike. Then he became a little more reasonable. I told him that we would give him a price for the stones he held--1000 pounds apiece. That brought out the first signs of grief that he had shown. 'Why, dash it all!' said he, 'I've let them go at six hundred for the three!' I soon managed to get the address of the receiver who had them, on promising him that there would be no prosecution. Off I set to him, and after much chaffering I got our stones at 1000*

*pounds apiece. Then I looked in upon your son, told him that all was right, and eventually got to my bed about two o'clock, after what I may call a really hard day's work."*

*"A day which has saved England from a great public scandal," said the banker, rising. "Sir, I cannot find words to thank you, but you shall not find me ungrateful for what you have done. Your skill has indeed exceeded all that I have heard of it. And now I must fly to my dear boy to apologise to him for the wrong which I have done him. As to what you tell me of poor Mary, it goes to my very heart. Not even your skill can inform me where she is now."*

*"I think that we may safely say," returned Holmes, "that she is wherever Sir George Burnwell is. It is equally certain, too, that whatever her sins are, they will soon receive a more than sufficient punishment."*

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## **MR. BAPTISTE**

by Alice Dunbar

He might have had another name; we never knew. Some one had christened him Mr. Baptiste long ago in the dim past, and it sufficed. No one had ever been known who had the temerity to ask him for another cognomen, for though he was a mild-mannered little man, he had an uncomfortable way of shutting up oyster-wise and looking disagreeable when approached concerning his personal history.

He was small: most Creole men are small when they are old. It is strange, but a fact. It must be that age withers them sooner and more effectually than those of un-Latinised extraction. Mr. Baptiste was, furthermore, very much wrinkled and lame. Like the Son of Man, he had nowhere to lay his head, save when some kindly family made room for him in a garret or a barn. He subsisted by doing odd jobs, white-washing, cleaning yards, doing errands, and the like.

The little old man was a frequenter of the levee. Never a day passed that his quaint little figure was not seen moving up and down about the ships. Chiefly did he haunt the Texas and Pacific warehouses and the landing-place of the Morgan-line steamships. This seemed like madness, for these spots are almost the busiest on the levee, and the rough seamen and 'longshoremen have least time to be bothered with small weak folks. Still there was method in the madness of Mr. Baptiste. The Morgan steamships, as every one knows, ply between New Orleans and Central and South American ports, doing the major part of the fruit trade; and many were the baskets of forgotten fruit that Mr. Baptiste took away with him unmolested. Sometimes, you know, bananas and mangoes and oranges and citrons will half spoil, particularly if it has been a bad voyage over the stormy Gulf, and the officers of the ships will give away stacks of fruit, too good to go into the river, too bad to sell to the fruit-dealers.

You could see Mr. Baptiste trudging up the street with his quaint one-sided walk, bearing his dilapidated basket on one shoulder, a nondescript head-cover pulled over his eyes, whistling cheerily. Then he would slip in at the back door of one of his clients with a brisk,

"Ah, bonjour, madame. Now here ees jus' a lil' bit fruit, some bananas. Perhaps madame would cook some for Mr. Baptiste?"

And madame, who understood and knew his ways, would fry him some of the bananas, and set it before

him, a tempting dish, with a bit of madame's bread and meat and coffee thrown in for lagniappe; and Mr. Baptiste would depart, filled and contented, leaving the load of fruit behind as madame's pay. Thus did he eat, and his clients were many, and never too tired or too cross to cook his meals and get their pay in baskets of fruit.

One day he slipped in at Madame Garcia's kitchen door with such a woe-begone air, and slid a small sack of nearly ripe plantains on the table with such a misery-laden sigh, that madame, who was fat and excitable, threw up both hands and cried out:

"Mon Dieu, Mistare Baptiste, fo' w'y you look lak dat? What ees de mattare?"

For answer, Mr. Baptiste shook his head gloomily and sighed again. Madame Garcia moved heavily about the kitchen, putting the plantains in a cool spot and punctuating her foot-steps with sundry "Mon Dieux" and "Miseres."

"Dose cotton!" ejaculated Mr. Baptiste, at last.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" groaned Madame Garcia, rolling her eyes heavenwards.

"Hit will drive de fruit away!" he continued.

"Misere!" said Madame Garcia

"Hit will."

"Oui, out," said Madame Garcia. She had carefully inspected the plantains, and seeing that they were good and wholesome, was inclined to agree with anything Mr. Baptiste said.

He grew excited. "Yaas, dose cotton-yardmans, dose 'longsho'mans, dey go out on one strik'. Dey t'row down dey tool an' say dey work no mo' wid niggers. Les veseaux, dey lay in de river, no work, no cargo, yaas. Den de fruit ship, dey can' mak' lan', de mans, dey t'reaten an' say t'ings. Dey mak' big fight, yaas. Dere no mo' work on de levee, lak dat. Ever'body jus' walk roun' an' say cuss word, yaas!"

"Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!" groaned Madame Garcia, rocking her guinea-blue-clad self to and fro.

Mr. Baptiste picked up his nondescript head-cover and walked out through the brick-reddened alley, talking excitedly to himself. Madame Garcia called after him to know if he did not want his luncheon, but he shook his head and passed on.

Down on the levee it was even as Mr. Baptiste had said. The 'long-shoremen, the cotton-yardmen, and the stevedores had gone out on a strike. The levee lay hot and unsheltered under the glare of a noonday sun. The turgid Mississippi scarce seemed to flow, but gave forth a brazen gleam from its yellow bosom. Great vessels lay against the wharf, silent and unpopulated. Excited groups of men clustered here and there among bales of uncompressed cotton, lying about in disorderly profusion. Cargoes of molasses and sugar gave out a sticky sweet smell, and now and then the fierce rays of the sun would kindle tiny blazes in the cotton and splinter-mixed dust underfoot.

Mr. Baptiste wandered in and out among the groups of men, exchanging a friendly salutation here and there. He looked the picture of woe-begone misery.

"Hello, Mr. Baptiste," cried a big, brawny Irishman, "sure an' you look, as if you was about to be hanged."

"Ah, mon Dieu," said Mr. Baptiste, "dose fruit ship be ruined fo' dees strik'."

"Damn the fruit!" cheerily replied the Irishman, artistically disposing of a mouthful of tobacco juice. "It ain't the fruit we care about, it's the cotton."

"Hear! hear!" cried a dozen lusty comrades.

Mr. Baptiste shook his head and moved sorrowfully away.

"Hey, by howly St. Patrick, here's that little fruit-eater!" called the centre of another group of strikers perched on cotton-bales.

"Hello! Where " began a second; but the leader suddenly held up his hand for silence, and the men listened eagerly.

It might not have been a sound, for the levee lay quiet and the mules on the cotton-drays dozed languidly, their ears pitched at varying acute angles. But the practiced ears of the men heard a familiar sound stealing up over the heated stillness.

"Oh ho ho humph humph humph ho ho ho oh o o humph!"

Then the faint rattle of chains, and the steady thump of a machine pounding.

If ever you go on the levee you'll know that sound, the rhythmic song of the stevedores heaving cotton-bales, and the steady thump, thump, of the machine compressing them within the hold of the ship.

Finnegan, the leader, who had held up his hand for silence, uttered an oath.

"Scabs! Men, come on!"

There was no need for a further invitation. The men rose in sullen wrath and went down the levee, the crowd gathering in numbers as it passed along. Mr. Baptiste followed in its wake, now and then sighing a mournful protest which was lost in the roar of the men.

"Scabs!" Finnegan had said; and the word was passed along, until it seemed that the half of the second District knew and had risen to investigate.

"Oh ho ho humph humph humph oh ho ho oh o o humph!"

The rhythmic chorus sounded nearer, and the cause manifested itself when the curve of the levee above the French Market was passed. There rose a White Star steamer, insolently settling itself to the water as each consignment of cotton bales was compressed into her hold.

"Niggers!" roared Finnegan wrathily.

"Niggers! niggers! Kill 'em, scabs!" chorused the crowd.

With muscles standing out like cables through their blue cotton shirts, and sweat rolling from glossy black skins, the Negro stevedores were at work steadily labouring at the cotton, with the rhythmic song swinging its cadence in the hot air. The roar of the crowd caused the men to look up with momentary apprehension, but at the over-seer's reassuring word they bent back to work.

Finnegan was a Titan. With livid face and bursting veins he ran into the street facing the French Market, and uprooted a huge block of paving stone. Staggering under its weight, he rushed back to the ship, and with one mighty effort hurled it into the hold.

The delicate poles of the costly machine tottered in the air, then fell forward with a crash as the whole iron framework in the hold collapsed.

"Damn ye," shouted Finnegan, "now yez can pack yer cotton!"

The crowd's cheers at this changed to howls, as the Negroes, infuriated at their loss, for those costly machines belong to the labourers and not to the ship-owners, turned upon the mob and began to throw brickbats, pieces of iron, chunks of wood, anything that came to hand. It was pandemonium turned loose over a turgid stream, with a malarial sun to heat the passions to fever point.

Mr. Baptiste had taken refuge behind a bread-stall on the outside of the market. He had taken off his cap, and was weakly cheering the Negroes on.

"Bravo!" cheered Mr. Baptiste.

"Will yez look at that damned fruit-eatin' Frinchman!" howled McMahon. "Cheerin' the niggers, are you?" and he let fly a brickbat in the direction of the bread-stall.

"Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!" wailed the bread-woman.

Mr. Baptiste lay very still, with a great ugly gash in his wrinkled brown temple. Fishmen and vegetable marchands gathered around him in a quick, sympathetic mass. The individual, the concrete bit of helpless humanity, had more interest for them than the vast, vague fighting mob beyond.



The noon-hour pealed from the brazen throats of many bells, and the numerous hoarse whistles of the steam-boats called the unheeded luncheon-time to the levee workers. The war waged furiously, and groans of the wounded mingled with curses and roars from the combatants.

"Killed instantly," said the surgeon, carefully lifting Mr. Baptiste into the ambulance.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, sounded the militia steadily marching down Decatur Street.

"Whist! do yez hear!" shouted Finnegan; and the conflict had ceased ere the yellow river could reflect the sun from the polished bayonets.

You remember, of course, how long the strike lasted, and how many battles were fought and lives lost before the final adjustment of affairs. It was a fearsome war, and many forgot afterwards whose was the first life lost in the struggle, poor little Mr. Baptiste's, whose body lay at the Morgue unclaimed for days before it was finally dropped unnamed into Potter's Field.

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## THE DOG

by Arnold Bennett, from *Tales of the Five Towns*

This is a scandalous story. It scandalized the best people in Bursley; some of them would wish it forgotten. But since I have begun to tell it I may as well finish. Moreover, like most tales whispered behind fans and across club-tables, it carries a high and valuable moral. The moral I will let you have it at once is that those who love in glass houses should pull down the blinds.

I

He had got his collar on safely; it bore his name Ellis Carter. Strange name for a dog, perhaps; and perhaps it was even more strange that his collar should be white. But such dogs are not common dogs. He tied his necktie exquisitely; caressed his hair again with two brushes; curved his young moustache, and then assumed his waistcoat and his coat; the trousers had naturally preceded the collar. He beheld the suit in the glass, and saw that it was good. And it was not built in London, either. There are tailors in Bursley. And in particular there is the dog's tailor. Ask the dog's tailor, as the dog once did, whether he can really do as well as London, and he will smile on you with gentle pity; he will not stoop to utter the obvious Yes. He may casually inform you that, if he is not in London himself, the explanation is that he has reasons for preferring Bursley. He is the social equal of all his clients. He belongs to the dogs' club. He knows, and everybody knows, that he is a first-class tailor with a first-class connection, and no dog would dare to condescend to him. He is a great creative artist; the dogs who wear his clothes may be said to interpret his creations. Now, Ellis was a great interpretative artist, and the tailor recognised the fact. When the tailor met Ellis on Duck Bank greatly wearing a new suit, the scene was impressive. It was as though Elgar had stopped to hear Paderewski play 'Pomp and Circumstance' on the piano.

Ellis descended from his bedroom into the hall, took his straw hat, chose a stick, and went out into the portico of the new large house on the Hawkins, near Oldcastle. In the neighbourhood of the Five Towns no road is more august, more correct, more detached, more umbrageous, than the Hawkins. M.P.'s live there. It is the link between the aristocratic and antique aloofness of Oldcastle and the solid commercial prosperity of the Five Towns. Ellis adorned the portico. Young (a bare twenty-two), fair, handsome, smiling, graceful, well-built, perfectly groomed, he was an admirable and a characteristic specimen of the race of dogs which, with the modern growth of luxury and the Luxurious Spirit, has become so marked a phenomenon in the social development of the once barbarous Five Towns.

When old Jack Carter (reputed to be the best turner that Bursley ever produced) started a little potbank near St. Peter's Church in 1861 he was then forty, and had saved two hundred pounds he little dreamt that the supreme and final result after forty years would be the dog. But so it was. Old Jack Carter had a son John Carter, who married at twenty-five

and lived at first on twenty-five shillings a week, and enthusiastically continued the erection of the fortune which old Jack had begun. At thirty-three, after old Jack's death, John became a Town Councillor. At thirty-six he became Mayor and the father of Ellis, and the recipient of a silver cradle. Ellis was his wife's maiden name. At forty-two he built the finest earthenware manufactory in Bursley, down by the canal-side at Shawport. At fifty-two he had been everything that a man can be in the Five Towns – from County Councillor to President of the Society for the Prosecution of Felons. Then Ellis left school and came to the works to carry on the tradition, and his father suddenly discovered him. The truth was that John Carter had been so laudably busy with the affairs of his town and county that he had nearly forgotten his family. Ellis, in the process of achieving doghood, soon taught his father a thing or two. And John learnt. John could manage a public meeting, but he could not manage Ellis. Besides, there was plenty of money; and Ellis was so ingratiating, and had curly hair that somehow won sympathy. And, after all, Ellis was not such a duffer as all that at the works. John knew other people's sons who were worse. And Ellis could keep order in the paintresses' 'shops' as order had never been kept there before.

John sometimes wondered what old Jack would have said about Ellis and his friends, those handsome dogs, those fine dandies, who taught to the Five Towns the virtue of grace and of style and of dash, who went up to London – some of them even went to Paris – and brought back civilization to the Five Towns, who removed from the Five Towns the reproach of being uncouth and behind the times. Was the outcome of two generations of unremitting toil merely Ellis? (Ellis had several pretty sisters, but they did not count.) John could only guess at what old Jack's attitude might have been towards Ellis – Ellis, who had his shirts made to measure. He knew exactly what was Ellis's attitude towards the ideals of old Jack, old Jack the class-leader, who wore clogs till he was thirty, and dined in his shirt-sleeves at one o'clock to the end of his life.

Ellis quitted the portico, ran down the winding garden-path, and jumped neatly and fearlessly on to an electric tramcar as it passed at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. The car was going to Hanbridge, and it was crowded with the joy of life; Ellis had to stand on the step. This was the Saturday before the first Monday in August, and therefore the formal opening of Knype Wakes, the most carnivalesque of all the carnivals which enliven the four seasons in the Five Towns. It is still called Knype Wakes, because once Knype overshadowed Hanbridge in importance; but its headquarters are now quite properly at Hanbridge, the hub, the centre, the Paris of the Five Towns – Hanbridge, the county borough of sixty odd thousand inhabitants. It is the festival of the masses that old Jack sprang from, and every genteel person who can leaves the Five Towns for the seaside at the end of July. Nevertheless, the district is never more crammed than at Knype Wakes. And, of course, genteel persons, whom circumstances have forced to remain in the Five Towns, sally out in the evening to 'do' the Wakes in a spirit of tolerant condescension. Ellis was in this case. His parents and sisters were at Llandudno, and he had been left in charge of the works and of the new house. He was always free; he could always pity the bondage of his sisters; but now he was more free than ever – he was absolutely free. Imagine the delicious feeling that surged in his heart as he prepared to plunge himself doggishly into the wild ocean of the Wakes. By the way, in that heart was the image of a girl.

## II

He stepped off the car on the outskirts of Hanbridge, and strolled gently and spectacularly into the joyous town. The streets became more and more crowded and noisy as he approached the market-place, and in Crown Square tramcars from the four quarters of the earth discharged tramloads of humanity at the rate of two a minute, and then glided off again empty in search of more humanity. The lower portion of Crown Square was devoted to tramlines; in the upper portion the Wakes began, and spread into the market-place, and thence by many tentacles into all manner of streets.

No Wakes is better than Knype Wakes; that is to say, no Wakes is more ear-splitting, more terrific, more dizzying, or more impassable. When you go to Knype Wakes you get stuck in the midst of an enormous crowd, and you see roundabouts, swings, switchbacks, myrioramas, atrocity booths, quack dentists, shooting-galleries, cocoanut-shies, and bazaars, all around you. Every establishment is jewelled, gilded, and electrically lighted; every establishment has an orchestra, most often played by steam and conducted by a stoker; every establishment has a steam whistle, which shrieks at the beginning and at the end of each round or performance. You stand fixed in the multitude listening to a thousand orchestras and whistles, with the roar of machinery and the merry din of car-bells, and the popping of rifles for a background of noise. Your eyes are charmed by the whirling of a million lights and the mad whirling of millions of beautiful girls and happy youths under the lights. For the roundabouts rule the scene; the roundabouts take the money. The supreme desire of the revellers is to describe circles, either on horseback or in yachts, either simple circles or complex circles, either up and down or straight along, but always circles. And it is as though inventors had sat up at nights puzzling their brains how best to make revellers seasick while keeping them equidistant from a steam-orchestra.... Then the crowd solidly lurches, and you find yourself up against a dentist, or a firm of wrestlers, or a roundabout, or an ice-cream refectory, and you take what comes. You have begun to 'do' the Wakes. The splendid insanity seizes you. The lights, the colours, the explosions, the

shrieks, the feathered hats, the pretty faces as they fly past, the gilding, the statuary, the August night, and the mingling of a thousand melodies in a counterpoint beyond the dreams of Wagner – these things have stirred the sap of life in you, have shown you how fine it is to be alive, and, careless and free, have caught up your spirit into a heaven from which you scornfully survey the year of daily toil between one Wakes and another as the eagle scornfully surveys the potato-field. Your nostrils dilate – nay, matters reach such a pass that, even if you are genteel, you forget to condescend.

### III

After Ellis had had the correct drink in the private bar up the passage at the Turk's Head, and after he had plunged into the crowd and got lost in it, and submitted good-humouredly to the frequent ordeal of the penny squirt as administered by adorable creatures in bright skirts, he found himself cast up by the human ocean on the macadam shore near a shooting-gallery. This was no ordinary shooting-gallery. It was one of Jenkins's affairs (Jenkins of Manchester), and on either side of it Jenkins's Venetian gondolas and Jenkins's Mexican mustangs were whizzing round two of Jenkins's orchestras at twopence a time, and taking thirty-two pounds an hour. This gallery was very different from the old galleries, in which you leaned against a brass bar and shot up a kind of a drain. This gallery was a large and brilliant room, with the front-wall taken out. It was hung with mirrors and cretonnes, it was richly carpeted, and, of course, it was lighted by electricity. Carved and gilded tables bore a whole armoury of weapons. You shot at tobacco-pipes, twisting and stationary, at balls poised on jets of water, and at proper targets. In the corners of the saloon, near the open, were large crimson plush lounges, on which you lounged after the fatigue of shooting.

A pink-clad girl, young and radiant, had the concern in charge.

She was speeding a party of bankrupt shooters, when she caught sight of Ellis. Ellis answered her smile, and strolled up to the booth with a countenance that might have meant anything. You can never tell what a dog is thinking.

'Ello!' said the girl prettily (or, rather, she shouted prettily, having to compete with the two orchestras). 'You here again?'

The truth was that Ellis had been there on the previous night, when the Wakes was only half opened, and he had come again to-night expressly in order to see her; but he would not have admitted, even to himself, that he had come expressly in order to see her; in his mind it was just a chance that he might see her. She was a jolly girl. (We are gradually approaching the scandalous part.)

'What a jolly frock!' he said, when he had shot five celluloid balls in succession off a jet of water.

Smiling, she mechanically took a ball out of the basket and let it roll down the conduit to the fountain.

'Do you think so?' she replied, smoothing the fluffy muslin apron with her small hands, black from contact with the guns. 'That one I wore last night was my second-best. I only wear this on Saturdays and Mondays.'

He nodded like a connoisseur. The sixth ball had sprung up to the top of the jet. He removed it with the certainty of a King's Prize winner, and she complimented him.

'Ah!' he said, 'you should have seen me before I took to smoking and drinking!'

She laughed freely. She was always showing her fine teeth. And she had such a frank, jolly countenance, not exactly pretty – better than pretty. She was a little short and a little plump, and she wore a necklace round her neck, a ring on her dainty, dirty finger, and a watch-bracelet on her wrist.

'Why!' she exclaimed. 'How old are you?'

'How old are you?' he retorted.

Dogs do not give things away like that.

'I'm nineteen,' she said submissively. 'At least, I shall be come Martinmas.'

And she yawned.

'Well,' he said, 'a little girl like you ought to be in bed.'

'Sunday to-morrow,' she observed.

'Aren't you glad you're English?' he remarked. 'If you were in Paris you'd have to work Sundays too.'

'Not me!' she said. 'Who told you that? Have you been to Paris?'

'No,' he admitted cautiously; 'but a friend of mine has, and he told me. He came back only last week, and he says they keep open Sundays, and all night sometimes. Sunday is the great day over there.'

'Well,' said the girl kindly, 'don't you believe it. The police wouldn't allow it. I know what the police are.'

More shooters entered the saloon. Ellis had finished his dozen; he sank into a lounge, and elegantly lighted a cigarette, and watched her serve the other marksmen. She was decidedly charming, and so jolly with him. He noticed with satisfaction that with the other marksmen she showed a certain high reserve.

They did not stay long, and when they were gone she came across to the lounge and gazed at him provocatively.

'Dashed if she hasn't taken a fancy to me!'

The thought ran through him like lightning.

'Well?' she said.

'What do you do with yourself Sundays?' he asked her.

'Oh, sleep.'

'All day?'

'All morning.'

'What do you do in the afternoon?'

'Oh, nothing.'

She laughed gaily.

'Come out with me, eh?'

'To-morrow? Oh, I should LOVE TO!' she cried.

Her voice expanded into large capitals because by a singular chance both the neighbouring orchestras stopped momentarily together, and thus gave her shout a fair field. The effect was startling. It startled Ellis. He had not for an instant expected that she would consent. Never, dog though he was, had he armed a girl out on any afternoon, to say nothing of Sunday afternoon, and Knype's Wakes Sunday at that! He had talked about girls at the club. He understood the theory. But the practice

The foundation of England's greatness is that Englishmen hate to look fools. The fear of being taken for a ninny will spur an Englishman to the most surprising deeds of courage. Ellis said 'Good!' with apparent enthusiasm, and arranged to be waiting for her at half-past two at the Turk's Head. Then he left the saloon and struck out anew into the ocean. He wanted to think it over.

Once, painful to relate, he had thoughts of failing to keep the appointment. However, she was so jolly and frank. And what a fancy she must have taken to him! No, he would see it through.

#### IV

If anybody had prophesied to Ellis that he would be driving out a Wakes girl in a dogcart that Sunday afternoon he would have laughed at the prophet; but so it occurred. He arrived at the Turk's Head at two twenty-five. She was there before him, dressed all in blue, except the white shoes and stockings, weighing herself on the machine in the yard. She showed her teeth, told him she weighed nine stone one, and abruptly asked him if he could drive. He said he could. She clapped her hands and sprang off the machine. Her father had bought a new mare the day before, and it was in the Turk's Head stable, and the yardman said it wanted exercise, and there was a dogcart and harness idling about, and, in short, Ellis should drive her to Sneyd Park, which she had long desired to see.

Ellis wished to ask questions, but the moment did not seem auspicious.

In a few minutes the new mare, a high and somewhat frisky bay, with big shoulders, was in the shafts of a high, green dogcart. When asked if he could drive, Ellis ought to have answered: 'That depends on the horse.' Many men can tool a fifteen-year-old screw down a country lane who would hesitate to get up behind a five-year-old animal (in need of exercise) for a spin down Broad Street, Hanbridge, on Knype Wakes Sunday. Ellis could drive; he could just drive. His father had always steadfastly refused to keep horses, but the fathers of other dogs were more progressive, and Ellis had had opportunities. He knew how to take the reins, and get up, and give the office; indeed, he had read a handbook on the subject. So he took the reins and got up, and the Wakes girl got up.

He chirruped. The mare merely backed.

'Give 'er 'er mouth,' said the yardman disgustedly.

'Oh!' said Ellis, and slackened the reins, and the mare pawed forward.

Then he had to turn her in the yard, and get her and the dogcart down the passage. He doubted whether he should do it, for the passage seemed a size too small. However, he did it, or the mare did it, and the entire organism swerved across a portion of the footpath into Broad Street.

For quite a quarter of a mile down Broad Street Ellis blushed, and kept his gaze between the mare's ears. However, the mare went beautifully. You could have driven her with a silken thread, so it seemed. And then the dog, growing accustomed to his prominence up there on the dogcart, began to be a bit doggy. He knew the little thing's age and weight, but, really, when you take a girl out for a Sunday spin you want more information about her than that. Her asked her name, and her name was Jenkins Ada. She was the great Jenkins's daughter.

('Oh,' thought Ellis, 'the deuce you are!')

'Father's gone to Manchester for the day, and aunt's looking after me,' said Ada.

'Do they know you've come out like this?'

'Not much!' She laughed deliciously. 'How lovely it is!'

At Knype they drew up before the Five Towns Hotel and descended. The Five Towns Hotel is the greatest hotel in North Staffordshire. It has two hundred rooms. It would not entirely disgrace Northumberland Avenue. In the Five Towns it is august, imposing, and unique. They had a lemonade there, and proceeded. A clock struck; it was a near thing. No more refreshments now until they had passed the three-mile limit!

Yes! Not two hundred yards further on she spied an ice-cream shop in Fleet Road, and Ellis learnt that she adored ice-cream. The mare waited patiently outside in the thronged street.

After that the pilgrimage to Sneyd was punctuated with ice-creams. At the Stag at Sneyd (where, among ninety-and-nine dogcarts, Ellis's dogcart was the brightest green of them all) Ada had another lemonade, and Ellis had something else. They saw the Park, and Ada giggled charmingly her appreciation of its beauty. The conversation throughout consisted chiefly of Ada's teeth. Ellis said he would return by a different route, and he managed to get lost. How anyone driving to Hanbridge from Sneyd could arrive at the mining village of Silverton is a mystery. But Ellis arrived there, and he ultimately came out at Hillport, the aristocratic suburb of Bursley, where he had always lived till the last year. He feared recognition there, and

his fear was justified. Some silly ass, a schoolmate, cried, 'Go it!' as the machine bowled along, and the mischief was that the mare, startled, went it. She went it down the curving hill, and the vehicle after her, like a kettle tied to a dog's tail.

Ellis winked stoutly at Ada when they reached the bottom, and gave the mare a piece of his mind, to which she objected. As they crossed the railway-bridge a goods-train ran underneath and puffed smoke into the mare's eyes. She set her ears back.

'Would you!' cried Ellis authoritatively, and touched her with the whip (he had forgotten the handbook).

He scarcely touched her, but you never know where you are with any horse. That mare, which had been a mirror of all the virtues all the afternoon, was off like a rocket. She overtook an electric car as if it had been standing still. Ellis sawed her mouth; he might as well have sawed the funnel of a locomotive. He had meant to turn off and traverse Bursley by secluded streets, but he perceived that safety lay solely in letting her go straight ahead up the very steep slope of Oldcastle Street into the middle of the town. It would be an amazing mare that galloped to the top of Oldcastle Street! She galloped nearly to the top, and then Ellis began to get hold of her a bit.

'Don't be afraid,' he said masculinely to Ada.

And, conscious of victory, he jerked the mare to the left to avoid an approaching car....

The next instant they were anchored against the roots of a lamp-post. When Ellis saw the upper half of the lamp-post bent down at right angles, and pieces of glass covering the pavement, he could not believe that he and his dogcart had done that, especially as neither the mare, nor the dogcart, nor its freight, was damaged. The machine was merely jammed, and the mare, satisfied, stood quiet, breathing rapidly.

But Ada Jenkins was crying.

And the car stopped a moment to observe. And then a number of chapel-goers on their way to the Sytch Chapel, which the Carter family still faithfully attended, joined the scene; and then a policeman.

Ellis sat like a stuck pig in the dogcart. He knew that speech was demanded of him, but he did not know where to begin.

The worst thing of all was the lamp-post, bent, moveless, unnatural, atrociously comic, accusing him.

The affair was over the town in a minute; 108 the next morning it reached Llandudno. Ellis Carter had been out on the spree with a Wakes girl in a dogcart on Sunday afternoon, and had got into such a condition that he had driven into a lamp-post at the top of Oldcastle Street just as people were going into chapel.

The lamp-post remained bent for three days a fearful warning to all dogs that doggishness has limits.

If it had not been a dogcart, and such a high, green dogcart; if it had been, say, a brougham, or even a cab! If it had not been Sunday! And, granting Sunday, if it had not been just as people were going into chapel! If he had not chosen that particular lamp-post, visible both from the market-place and St. Luke's Square! If he had only contrived to destroy a less obtrusive lamp-post in some unfrequented street! And if it had not been a Wakes girl if the reprobate had only selected for his guilty amours an actress from one of the touring companies, or even a star from the Hanbridge Empire yea, or even a local barmaid! But a Wakes girl!

Ellis himself saw the enormity of his transgression. He lay awake astounded by his own doggishness.

And yet he had seldom felt less doggy than during that trip. It seemed to him that doggishness was not the glorious thing he had thought. However, he cut a heroic figure at the dogs' club. Every admiring face said: 'Well, you have been going the pace! We always knew you were a hot un, but, really

V

On the following Friday evening, when Ellis jumped off the car opposite his home on the Hawkins, he saw in the road, halted, a train of vast and queer-shaped waggons in charge of two traction-engines. They were painted on all sides with the great name of Jenkins. They contained Jenkins's roundabouts and shooting-saloons, on their way to rouse the joy of life in

other towns. And he perceived in front of the portico the high, green dogcart and the lamp-post-destroying mare.

He went in. The family had come home that afternoon. Sundry of his sisters greeted him with silent horror on their faces in the hall. In the breakfast-room, which gave off the drawing-room, was his mother in the attitude of an intent listener. She spoke no word.

And Ellis listened, too.

'Yes,' a very powerful and raucous voice was saying in the drawing-room, 'I reckoned I'd call and tell ye myself, Mister Carter, what I thought on it. My gell, a motherless gell, but brought up respectable; sixth standard at Whalley Range Board School; and her aunt a strict God-fearing woman! And here your son comes along and gets hold of the girl while her aunt's at the special service for Wakes folks in Bethesda Chapel, and runs off with her in my dogcart with one of my hosses, and raises a scandal all o'er the Five Towns. God bless my soul, mister! I tell'n ye I hardly liked to open o' Monday afternoon, I was that ashamed! And I packed Ada off to Manchester. It seems to me that if the upper classes, as they call 'em the immoral classes I call 'em 'ud look after themselves a bit instead o' looking after other people so much, things might be a bit better, Mister Carter. I dare say you think it's nothing as your son should go about ruining the reputation of any decent, respectable girl as he happens to fancy, Mister Carter; but this is what I say. I say

Mr. Carter was understood to assert, in his most pacific and pained public-meeting voice, that he regretted, infinitely regretted

Mrs. Carter, weeping, ran out of the breakfast-room.

And soon afterwards the traction-engines rumbled off, and the high, green dogcart followed them.

Ellis sat spell-bound.

He heard the parlourmaid go into the drawing-room and announce, 'Tea is ready, sir!' and then his father's dry cough.

And then the parlourmaid came into the breakfast-room: 'Tea is ready, Mr. Ellis!'

Oh, the meal!

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